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THE CHURCH
AND HER SACRAMENTS

BY
DR. FREDERICK ROTHWELL DEAN



DOCTRINAL SERMONS



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SACRAMENTS**

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Doctrinal Sermons

By

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PREFACE

The presentation of this volume of Doctrinal Sermons on the Sacraments of the Church has been undertaken because of a pressing need. The average Anglican Churchman is very badly equipped when he is called upon to substantiate the Christian faith. And the fault lies almost exclusively with a certain band of the clergy, who persistently refrain from teaching the fundamentals of their religion.

It may be from a mistaken idea that the laity are indifferent to such sermons. We shall, however, never build up a Church, strong and impregnable in the hour of danger, if we feed our members on nothing more than the scales of passing interest. They need the full rich corn of God's truth, and, what is more, they must have it, if our Church would prosper.

The great majority of people outside the Church has a pitiable wrong conception of what she teaches. It is therefore our duty to set them right when occasion offers itself, but greater

still should it be our privilege to strengthen those who are within the fold, in a right understanding of all things.

One more point. In a perusal of these sermons it will be noticed that no mention is made of the Sacrament of Unction. Extreme Unction is exclusively Papal, and does not concern us ; but Unction is undoubtedly Catholic and Evangelical (not Protestant) and is practised to a limited degree in the Church at the present time. Immediately after the Reformation it was universally used, as is evidenced in the Office for Unction in the 1st Prayer Book of Edward VI. (1549).

The Scriptural proof of its value is found in the Epistle of S. James (v. 14, 15) : “ *Is any sick among you ? let him call for the elders of the Church ; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord ; and the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up ; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.*”

Possibly it was the unscriptural doctrine of Extreme Unction of the Roman Church which with the anointment gave grace to the sick body when all possible hope of restoration had gone, and which was never practised within the

Church of Christ until the Council of Trent in the sixteenth century, which made the rulers of our own Church, out of fear, dispense with this truly Scriptural Sacrament of Unction in the 2nd Prayer Book of Edward VI. (1552). It is, as the great Bishop Forbes says, "*the lost pleiad of the Anglican firmament.*" Within the Church uniformity is only required in her public offices. Anything of a private nature may be performed at the discretion of the priest.

Although it is impossible to lodge any complaint against this Sacrament, it still remains true that it is not included in the Church's public teaching—in her present Book of Common Prayer. For that reason, and that reason alone, does it find no lengthier notice in this present volume.

F. ROTHWELL DEAN.

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The Church and Her Sacraments

SERMON I

WHAT IS A CHRISTIAN ?

“And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.”
—ACTS xi. 26.

IT is a curious fact that although the word “Christian” nowadays is one of the commonest in the English language, it is a term which receives most sparing use in the New Testament. In its plural form it is only found once, and that in the text which we are about to consider, and in its single form twice: (1) by S. Peter, who connects it with a man’s vocation of suffering for the sake of Christ—“*If any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God on that behalf*”¹; and (2) in that well-known but altogether mistranslated passage “*Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian!*”² It seems at first sight a somewhat

¹ 1 Pet. iv. 16.

² Acts (R.V.) xxvi. 28.

remarkable fact, and yet when we consider how close in point of time were the books of the New Testament Canon to the days of our Blessed Lord, it is not very surprising that these primitive Christians should be quite content with the name "*disciple*."

The term "*Christian*," however, in these days is used somewhat loosely. Men seem only to have the vaguest notion of its implication, and the commonest interpretation of the word is most certainly not the one which is given in the New Testament.

If you ask the majority of people what a Christian is, they will tell you that he is one who is leading a godly life, one who is taking Christ as his pattern, and is striving to walk in His footsteps.

Yet such a definition is entirely and absolutely wrong. One of the great objects of Christ's coming into this world was to found a Church, an organised visible society, in which, through a regularly-ordained ministry, the benefits of His death and resurrection might be transmitted by various means to the generations which were yet unborn.

Of what avail would these great acts of our Divine Lord have been to us if we had never known the glorious tidings? And how could

these tidings have been handed on through successive generations unless some institution had been founded whose function was to see that the Word was preached, and that the Sacraments were administered for the due transmission of grace ?

It was essential then that such an institution, which we call the Church, should be founded, and the Christian or Catholic Church, which we must always remember was an outcome of the Jewish Church, came into existence when Jesus Christ chose and ordained His disciples. There we see the Christian Church in the germ.

We are told, however, by many people to-day that the Church is an invisible society, *i.e.*, that it is impossible to say with accuracy who do, and who do not, belong to it, inasmuch as no one can read the heart of another. But surely such a contention is absurd. The Church is spoken of in Scripture as the Body of Christ, and one can hardly speak of an invisible body on earth. And, further, did not our Lord liken His Church to a city set on a hill which cannot be hid ?

Similarly, the term "*Kingdom of Heaven*" or "*Kingdom of God*," as used in the New Testament (with perhaps one or two exceptions),

invariably means the Church on earth, and, further, as the parables of our Lord open with that expression and contrast the Kingdom of Heaven in the one case to a field with tares and wheat growing side by side, and in another case to a drownet containing fish both good and bad—so we are bound to recognise that the Church must of necessity be a visible society, not consisting entirely of the good, but, as the parables lead us to expect, of men both righteous and evil.

A man therefore who is a Christian is one who is a member of the Christian Church. Such a statement requires no proof, for it is difficult to say what else a Christian could possibly be. Where the difficulty arises is as to the manner in which men obtain their membership of this Church of Christ.

Can I become a member by reading the Gospel, and having a sentimental desire to be like Christ?

Many people answer that question in the affirmative.

But, notice, can I join any human institution simply by reading the rules and endeavouring to obey them in my daily life? For instance, is a man a soldier simply by knowing the drill, and making himself acquainted with the routine of a soldier's life? Certainly not. There is

a form or ceremony to go through, and until the man has submitted to it he cannot possibly be a soldier whatever his other qualifications may be.

The same method of procedure applies to every human society which has been called into existence.

Now the Church, although of Divine origin, has to deal with human beings, and it would have been very remarkable if Christ had made the terms of membership different in kind from those which were universally recognised. As a fact, *He did not*.

The entrance into the Jewish Church—or, in other words, a man became a Jew by *circumcision*. So, before our Blessed Lord ascended into heaven, He appointed a means by which men and women might become members of His Kingdom—the Church. Jesus said to His disciples, “*Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptising them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.*”¹

Thus were disciples made through Baptism; by this service of initiation did men enter the Christian Church. And these disciples were first called Christians at Antioch.

¹ S. Matt. xxviii. 19.

Did the Apostles fulfil their Master's command, or did they like the wiseacres of the present day consider that such a function was unnecessary?

No! they were obedient. Three thousand persons were baptised on the first Whitsun-Day. S. Philip the Deacon baptised many in Samaria. The Ethiopian eunuch was baptised. So was Saul of Tarsus, even though he had been converted. So were Cornelius and his friends at Cæsarea, the jailor at Philippi and many others. Baptism was the door and only door by which a man could enter the Church—the only way by which he could become a Christian. S. Paul asserts the same truth. “*By one Spirit are we all baptised into one body.*”¹ That is the Church. And again, “*As many of you as have been baptised into Christ, have put on Christ.*”²

In other words, *Baptism makes a man a Christian.*

The Church is sometimes spoken of as being intolerant and uncharitable in stating this truth. But surely we cannot do otherwise than declare it, if we be true to Christ. A man may say, “I believe in the Lord, and I love Him, therefore I must be a Christian.” When we

¹ 1 Cor. xii. 13.

² Gal. iii. 27.

tell him that he has no warrant in Holy Scripture for such a conclusion, he is straightway offended. Besides, does not Christ say, "*Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you*" ?¹ And if the command to be baptised is ignored, how can we possibly believe that such a man's love is a worthy one ?

And, further, something more than belief is necessary for salvation, for it was our Blessed Lord who again said, "*He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved.*"²

A very common objection launched against the Church's definition of a Christian takes some such form as this—"Are you prepared to assert that a drunkard, for instance, who has been baptised is a Christian, whilst a Quaker, on the other hand, who will not recognise the Sacraments, is denied that title ?" And we reply that such is the case.

The Quaker, though perhaps practising many of the Christian virtues, cannot possibly be a Christian until he has joined Christ's Society in the one and only way which the Founder instituted. The drunkard, if baptised, is a Christian in spite of his faults, though an unworthy one. The wicked Christian will be

¹ S. John xv. 14.

² S. Mark xvi. 16.

punished, but he is still the Father's son, and like the Prodigal Son in the parable when he repents will say, "*I will arise and go to my Father*" ¹—not "*I will now become God's son,*" but "*I will return.*"

Nowhere in Holy Scriptures does it state that because a man is a Christian it necessarily implies a life of approximate holiness.

The Epistles were written solely to Christian people, and yet notice how S. Paul upbraids them for their sin. Why is this? The reason lies in this important fact that because they were Christians they ought to have known better; for obviously the *sin of a Christian is worse than that of a heathen*. Does S. Paul ever call upon his readers to become Christians? Never once. They had obtained that privilege already. Always the burthen of his message was that "*they would walk more worthily of that vocation unto which they had been called.*" ²

If, then, we would only realise this truth—that baptism makes a man a Christian—we should understand that the various Offices of the Church were only available to Christians and to no one else.

How often we hear the Church denounced

¹ S. Luke xv. 18.

² Eph. iv. 1.

because she orders her ministers not to read the Burial Office over the unbaptised dead. But where is the grievance ? If you read the Office carefully, you will see that it is intended solely for the Christian dead ; it is a meaningless farce to use it over one who has refused to be baptised. Suppose a civilian desires a military funeral, will his wish be gratified ? Certainly not, and the reason is obvious : he has never been a soldier. On similar ground, is it not presumptive for a non-Christian to expect at his death a Christian funeral ? When such cases do arise the dead are not buried without any ceremony, but you cannot use the Office of the Church which all through presupposes that the deceased was baptised and grafted into the Body of Christ.

For the same reason an unbaptised person is cut off from all Church privileges. He must first of all become a Christian before he can receive those blessings which our Lord, through His Church, gives to those who are her members.

When we are baptised then we become Christians, but Christians alone in that we are just commencing our spiritual life and have been placed upon the road which leads to heaven.

In the words of the Catechism "*we have to lead the rest of our life according to this beginning.*"

We are now in a state of salvation, and *must perform those good works which God has prepared for us to walk in.*

We have to be watchful. We have “*to work out our salvation with fear and trembling.*” ¹

We must give all diligence “*to make our calling and election sure,*” ² believing that “*he only who endures unto the end will be saved.*” ³

¹ Phil. ii. 12.

² 2 S. Peter i. 10.

³ S. Matt. xxiv. 13.

SERMON II

WHAT IS THE CHURCH ?

“And He is the head of the body, the Church.”—
COLOSSIANS i. 18.

BEFORE we proceed to the true definition of this query, it will be necessary for us to remember that prior to the creation of the Christian or Catholic Church there was already in existence another Church—a Church of God—the Jewish Church. This latter was instituted by God when He called Abraham from his native land and promised him such untold blessings.

The history of that Church is the history of the Israelitish nation. In other words the Church and nation were interchangeable terms. This Jewish Church possessed, as was only natural, certain well-defined characteristics. For admittance into that Church it was necessary that all males should be circumcised, and any disobedience to that command meant excommunication.

Certain men were appointed as officers of the

Church, positions which in course of time assumed a threefold order, viz., High Priest, Priest, and Levite. The duties of those ministers were to interpret God's will (or, as it was called, the Law) unto the people, and to offer their intercessions and sacrifices before the Throne of Grace.

It was the foundation of such a Church which kept alive the knowledge of God through the dark ages of Israelitish history.

Further, there was only one Church.

It is true that attempts were made to divide the Church, but what were the consequences? Koran, Dathan, and Abiram opposed Moses and Aaron, and demanded by what authority they ruled the Church. The answer was given by Jehovah, who allowed the earth to swallow up these malcontents.¹ Later, Jeroboam, the first king of divided Israel, created a schism in the Church. He set up, without authority, places of worship at Dan and Beth-el, and because all the true priests of God were stationed in the rival kingdom of Judah, he made, on his own responsibility, priests of the lowest of the people.² This act was so terrible a sin that it brought about not only his own downfall but that of his own country. Twenty times do we

¹ Num. xvi. 32.

² 1 Kings xii. 31.

read of him in the pages of the Old Testament as "*the man who made Israel to sin.*"

When we come to the history of the Jewish Church in our Lord's own day, we read of the Samaritans, and as there is some confusion in people's minds as to who they were, let us be quite sure that they were not Jews. They never had belonged to the Jewish Church, and therefore they could never have separated from her. They practised the rite of Circumcision, and had their sacrifices and feasts like the Jews, but theirs was an *imitation*. The Jewish Church encompassed them, but they would never join her, perhaps because, like many people to-day, they said that their Church was as good as, if not better than, the Jewish.

Now, our Blessed Lord was a most devout Jew.

He submitted to every ordinance of the Church.

He attended regularly the services in the synagogues, and when in Jerusalem was constantly in the Temple.

What had He to say to these Samaritans?

In the parable of the Good Samaritan, He held up the man as an example to the Jews. Of the ten lepers who were cleansed, the one who shewed any gratitude was a Samaritan.

Christ appreciated their piety and their

solicitude for the good of others ; and this is in marked contrast to His denunciation of the hypocrisy and deceit of the Pharisees.

But did our Lord's charity and gracious sympathy ever lead him to recognise their religious position ? Did it constrain Him to proclaim that their relation to the Jewish Church was a matter of little consequence ? No. He distinctly told the woman of Samaria, as He sat by the well, "*Ye worship ye know not what.*"¹ In spite of their circumcision, their possession of the Law, their worship ; their religion was senseless ; they were still in the dark. Further, He adds that the Light and the Truth were the possession of the Jews. Yes, those Jews whom He so persistently denounced, gross as were their defects, their formalism, and their superstition — He could proclaim Himself as one of them when He says, "*we know what we worship*" ; and as if to clinch the argument He asserts, "*Salvation is of the Jews.*" Why ? Not because of their piety, nor in any sense of their worthiness, but because the Jewish Church was God's Church, to which had been committed the oracles and the covenant ; and yet, in spite of the people's abominations, she would still

¹ S. John iv. 22.

remain the instrument or means for teaching and saving mankind.

And be it further remembered that our Divine Master never worshipped—no, nor ever taught—in any of the synagogues of the Samaritans. How could He? There would have been no point in worshipping with men “who knew not what they worshipped.” To these Samaritans Christ was ever charitable and sympathetic, but never by a single word or deed did He ever recognise their religious system.

But I can imagine you saying, “*What has all this to do with the subject before us?*” It is the Christian, not the Jewish, Church which claims our attention now. Still are we not aware that the Old Covenant was but the shadow of the New—the Jewish Church but the type of the Christian. The purpose of the former was to educate men until they were capable of accepting Christ, and then her mission was fulfilled.

But God's will is unchangeable, and therefore we expect, and rightly so, that the Christian Church should be built on the model of the Jewish. There should be some form of admission. This is found in Holy Baptism, called by S. Paul “*The Circumcision of Christ.*”¹

¹ Eph. ii. 11-13.

There should be a threefold order of the Ministry. This is found in the orders of bishop, priest and deacon. And there should be a unity, a oneness, in the Christian Church as was found in the Jewish Church of old. This is not found now, because men do not understand in these days the meaning of the Church of Christ.

Of course, everyone knows that she was founded by her Lord, and was to supersede and occupy the position of the Jewish Church ; and for many centuries she was at unity with herself—she was undivided. Every Churchman, every baptised person, every Christian (they all mean the same) was in full communion with the Catholic Church.

But now, if we look at the religious condition, even of our own country, we find not *one* body but considerably more than 300 *separate religious bodies*, each claiming to be a Church. Can that claim be substantiated ? In the New Testament we read a great deal about the Kingdom of Heaven—a phrase which in almost every case refers to the Church of Christ.

Our Lord has only one Kingdom, therefore there can only be one Church. In the text the Church is spoken of as the Body of Christ. Christ has only one body, therefore there can be only one Church.

So from quite a number of other scriptural passages can the same truth be proved.

*“ By one Spirit are we all baptised into one body.”*¹

“ There is one body and one Spirit even as ye are called into one hope of your calling.” ■

On the last day of the Saviour's life, He, the Founder of this Church, prayed for unity. *“ That they all may be one, even as we are one. I in them and thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in One, and that the world may know that Thou hast sent me.”*³

And this prayer did not refer to any inward unity, nor to that subtle heresy that the Church is an invisible body.

At any rate, the Apostles did not interpret Christ's words in such a way, for S. Paul says, *“ Mark them which cause divisions contrary to the doctrine which ye have received, and avoid them.”*⁴

He also foretold that men should arise *“ speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after them.”*⁵

S. Jude also says that *“ those who separate themselves have not the Spirit.”*⁶

In the face of all this evidence, it is obvious

¹ 1 Cor. xii. 13. ² Eph. iv. 4. ³ S. John xvii. 21-23.

⁴ Rom. xvi. 17. ⁵ Acts xx. 30. ⁶ S. Jude 19.

that there can only be one Church, and that all these other bodies or denominations who, without any warrant, have taken to themselves the name of Church, are not Churches at all.

No man can found a new Church, only God Himself.

Is it right, then, that such bodies should have separated themselves from the Catholic Church ? And the answer is a decided “ *No.*”

There are divisions in the Body of Christ, against which we have been warned, and therefore all religious division must be wrong.

Again, Christ gave to His Church certain powers, one of which was *authority*. “ *He that heareth you, heareth Me ; and he that despiseth you, despiseth Me.*” ¹ S. Paul says that we are “ *to obey them that have the rule over us.*” ■ But when people leave this Catholic Church and form new sects, they are disobeying those who have the rule over them, they are setting at naught the authorities of the Church, and attempting to substitute new ones, which in reality are no authorities at all. For the most trivial reasons many of the sects have come into existence and have been formed by men to whom no authority has ever been committed.

¹ S. Luke x. 16.

² Titus iii. 1.

Can we, then, from any point of view, think of them as being comparable with the Church Catholic—the Church which through her bishops can claim direct descent from the Apostles ?

It is easy enough for men to say that it matters little what religious body you belong to ; but have they the slightest knowledge of how *God* regards this schism ?

We have seen how He dealt with those who strove to set up different denominations outside the Jewish Church. We have seen how Christ regarded the religion of the Samaritan, and prayed so earnestly for unity. Therefore we can claim to know something of what God's Will is on this question.

We are repeatedly told that Dissent is justified inasmuch as it sprang into existence when the Church was apathetic and grossly neglecting her duty. But has the Anglican Church ever been worse than the Jewish Church in the days of Christ ? Surely not. Yet He—the Christ—never left her. He was faithful to her, though she crucified Him.

Would it not have been better for these ardent souls to have remained within the bosom of the Church, and reformed her, instead of rending into fragments the Body of Christ ? Their subsequent action shewed the world that they could

not live in such proximity to the tares. They must have a separate field of their own, in direct violation to Christ's teaching ; but even in these new fields there are still plenty of tares. When we are told that there are multitudes of people outside the Church whose lives are patterns of godliness, we can only exclaim "*Thank God!*" We rejoice, but be it remembered they are good not *because* of their Dissent but in *spite* of it.

If such people can be good away from the Church of Christ's institution with her God-given ministry, her appointed Sacraments and other means of grace, how much better would they be within the Church's fold. Further, we need such people. We need those very spiritual gifts they possess, for they would be of incalculable value in the propagation of Divine Truth.

Yet the truth cannot be hid. The Dissenter's attitude towards the Church is one of open schism, in absolute disaccord with the will of God. The Church herself cannot change her position nor alter her Faith to please any community of men. She offers to all the right hand of fellowship and pleads with these wandering children to return in penitence to the safety and the love of the Mother Church.

No one can over-estimate the inherent damage which is done to the spiritual life of the world

through these unhappy divisions. How directly responsible they are for the bulk of the indifference and unbelief around us. There is nothing in dissent which may not be obtained in far greater abundance within the Church. She does not, like the sects, exaggerate one particular doctrine out of all proportion to the others, but gives to each its proper place and prominence. This is found in her Creeds.

She presents to the world a Faith, every article of which may be proved by most certain warrant of Holy Scripture.

The Faith of the Primitive Church—the Undivided Church she holds in these latter days.

She prays in her Litany to be delivered from heresy and schism. Dissent in all its forms she abhors, for it is dishonouring to God ; but the Dissenter she calls upon to listen to the Master's voice and help forward that glorious consummation "*When we all may be perfect in one.*"¹

¹ S. John xvii. 23.

SERMON III

ANGLICAN CHURCH *v.* CHURCH OF ROME

“Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free.”—S. JOHN viii. 32.

ONE of the great objects for which our Blessed Lord came into the world was to establish a kingdom among men—a Divine Society, a Church in which all peoples, nations, and languages should be united in one common fellowship, and which should be the means of transmitting, through the ages unimpaired, the glorious truths of Divine revelation.

This Church was to be a Catholic—a universal—Church.

Unlike the Jewish Church from which she sprang and on which she was modelled, she was not to be the Church of one particular nation or race of men, but should embrace within her fold men from the four corners of the world.

In this characteristic was to be found her chief claim to Catholicity.

Organised by the Divine Hand and filled with the power of the Holy Ghost on the first great Whitsun-Day, she commenced her commission in the world—to baptise and preach the Gospel to every creature.

For nearly 1,900 years she has pursued her task in the face of stupendous difficulties, but she has ever been undaunted, confident in the truth of her Master's words, "*The gates of hell shall not prevail against her.*"¹ Very early in the history of this Christian or Catholic Church, it was found that she must be organised. The Apostles could not live for ever, and, when they were called to rest, it was essential that others should have been appointed to take their positions in the management and conduct of the Church's Mission. These men were known as Bishops—the earliest of which, we are told in the New Testament, being Timothy, Bishop of Ephesus, and Titus, Bishop of Crete.

But this was not all. There were other ministers appointed who should act under the supervision of the Bishop, to whom were given the distinctive titles of Priests and Deacons, in accordance with the spiritual duties entrusted to them.

¹ S. Matt. xvii. 18.

Thus we find established from the first century a threefold order of the ministry of the Church, one which we find existent in every true branch of the Catholic Church right down the centuries even to the present day. Now from the earliest times each Bishop was recognised as being on an equality with every other ; each Bishop was supreme and independent in his own See or sphere of jurisdiction. But as time went on, and certain cities rose to greater commercial or political eminence, it was only to be expected that their Bishops should share in the greatness or majesty of those cities. If ever there was a meeting of Bishops, then it became the recognised thing that the Bishop of the important city should preside. This led in course of time to the establishment of patriarchates, in which certain bishoprics were grouped together under a leader, who was called a Patriarch—a Bishop who possessed no greater spiritual faculties than any of the others, but was in very truth “ *first among equals*.” In fact the relationship was very much akin to that which exists between the Archbishops of Canterbury and York and any other bishop at the present time in England.

There were three original Patriarchal Sees. Rome in the west, Antioch in the east and Alexandria in the south of Christendom.

Jerusalem and Constantinople were raised to this dignity later.

I have laid stress upon this organisation of the Church because one of these Patriarchs—the Bishop or Pope of Rome—has arrogantly laid claim to universal dominion. He demands to be recognised as the Vicar of Christ upon earth, the infallible teacher of the whole world, the absolute monarch of the Church, and the despotic lord of the thoughts and consciences of the whole of Christendom.

Against these assumptions the true Catholic Church in this country, the Anglican Church, has ever protested. In return the Roman Church, or, as she has been aptly described, this Italian Mission, denies that the Anglican Church is Catholic at all. She spurns her Orders, repudiates her Sacraments, brands her as schismatic, and appropriates to herself the proud and distinctive title of the “*Catholic Church*.” It now remains to show that the Church of Rome has not one shred of evidence to support any of these false accusations. Nay, on the contrary, both history and revelation condemn her as being most “uncatholic,” and as having terribly departed from the faith and practice of the early Church.

First of all, then, the Anglican Church claims absolute independence for herself and her

Bishops, and, as she states in the 37th Article, "*The Bishop of Rome hath no jurisdiction in this Realm of England.*" For this attitude we are often accused by Romanists of base ingratitude, inasmuch as they tell us that we owe the evangelisation of this country entirely to them.

Let us see if there is any truth in this indictment.

Every Anglican is indeed grateful for the spirit which led Bishop Gregory of Rome to send S. Augustine to these isles in A.D. 596. But is it not a matter of historical truth that this notable missionary found the Faith fully established on his arrival? Is it not true that the Catholic Church was an organised body here three hundred years before the mission was ever sent from Rome? Is it not true that the major part of Britain was never converted by S. Augustine but by the missionaries of Iona? And, most important of all, even if the whole of Britain had been taught by S. Augustine alone, is it not true that the Gospel he taught was the Gospel in its purity, the one we accept to-day—a Gospel bitterly antagonistic to all that may be called distinctly Romish, at the present time?

In fact, Popery as we understand it now never existed for the first thousand years of the Christian era.

But why does the Pope claim to be the universal Bishop?

Why does he claim to be supreme, and the Roman Church to be the only true Church? This doctrine is built upon the supposed supremacy of S. Peter over the other Apostles, that S. Peter was the first Bishop of Rome, and that this privilege of supremacy was handed down to his successors. What evidence is there for all this? None, absolutely none. We do know that S. Peter was the first Bishop of Antioch, and remained there from A.D. 38-40. It is surely not unnatural to ask why the supremacy of this Apostle did not pass down the Antiochian See.

But Romanists tell us that the Apostle was Bishop of Rome for twenty-five years. When did they first learn this? Not until it was asserted by S. Jerome in the year A.D. 420.

One would have thought that so important a fact as this would have at least been casually mentioned by the hundreds of writers who came between. There is, however, not one word. S. Paul wrote a letter to the Christians at Rome, and though he salutes many of his friends there he never mentions S. Peter.¹ How remarkable

¹ Rom. xvi.

that he should have omitted so important a personage as this great Apostle and Bishop!

Further, this same S. Paul lived for two years in "*his own hired house*" ¹ in the very heart of Rome. During that time he wrote Epistles to the Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and Philemon. So far from alluding to S. Peter as being Bishop of Rome, he never once refers to him as being there at all. And so with all the other Patristic writers, no reference is ever made of him as occupying the bishopric until A.D. 420. It is a pure assumption and nothing less.

The Romanist, however, is by no means vanquished.

He states that Christ distinctly said that S. Peter should be supreme; though even if that could be proved, it would not connect him with the bishopric of Rome. Here is the passage:

"*Thou art Peter and upon this rock I will build my Church.*" ²

The point for us to consider is what is meant by the word "*rock*." Does it mean that S. Peter is the rock or foundation of the Church?

A few of the Fathers favour that view, but the majority interpret the word "*rock*" as meaning either Christ Himself or the confession

¹ Acts xxviii. 30.

² S. Matt. xvi. 18.

of faith in Him as previously made by the Apostle ; but in no single instance do any of the Fathers suppose that any of the other Apostles were in subjection to S. Peter. On the contrary, S. Paul, in writing to the Ephesians, says that the Church "*is built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone.*" ¹

We readily admit that unique privileges were given to S. Peter.

He it was who opened the Kingdom of Heaven both to the Jews and Gentiles, but this did not give him any supremacy over the others.

At the first Church Council ever held at Jerusalem it was not S. Peter, but S. James—S. James the Lord's brother, not of the twelve, S. James Justus—who presided, because it was his See. It was the messengers of S. James who caused S. Peter to withdraw from eating with the Gentiles at Antioch. It was S. Paul—not of the twelve—who emphatically declared that "*he was not a whit behind the very chiefest Apostles,*" ² and who on another occasion withstood S. Peter to the face "*because he was to be blamed.*" ³

But you may say, "Has not the bishopric of

¹ Eph. ii. 20.

² 2 Cor. xi. 5.

³ 5. Gal. ii. 11.

Rome always been considered the foremost amongst the Sees of the Church ? ” Yes, that is so ; but the reason is clear : Rome for centuries was the capital of the world—what more likely then that its Bishop should obtain this precedence ? Yet the fact remains that it was due to no Divine Charter of privilege but merely the accident of Imperial position.

Again, this doctrine of Roman supremacy was one of gradual growth. For the first six centuries of the Christian era, Rome herself knew nothing about it. Strangely enough it was not the Bishop of Rome but that of Constantinople who first assumed the title of Universal Bishop ; and, still more strange, it was the Bishop of Rome who protested most vehemently against it. Here is a portion of the letter which he addressed to his brother at Constantinople : “ *The sole head of the Universal Church is Christ : and what account will you have to render to God at the last day, if you thus try to subject to yourself as universal Bishop the members of Christ, all of whom are equal ?* ”

On the assumption that the Pope is infallible, it is difficult to reconcile this letter with the attitude of the Church of Rome to-day.

It was not, however, until the eleventh century that the claim of the Pope to supremacy had

made much serious progress ; then this belief began to spread and naturally affected the Anglican Church.

Still, let it be recorded that even in the darkest times, when the degradation and humiliation of our Church was almost complete, she was never without champions and witnesses who stood for her independence, and who were the pioneers of that Reformation of the sixteenth century in which the power of Rome in this country was permanently crushed. But why did this belief in Roman supremacy receive so ready an assent in mediæval times ? It was due entirely to a supposed discovery of writings attributed to the Fathers, and to thirty of the earliest Bishops of Rome, during the first four centuries.

May I give you one or two quotations from these writings ?

“ Just as the Son of God received from His Father the government of the Church and of the nations, so that every knee should bow to Him, so the same ample power did He give to Peter and his successors.” (S. Cyril).

Again, *“ It is necessary that all depend upon the Church of Rome, as a well-spring or head.”* (S. Irenæus.) There are scores of like utterances.

Now every one of these quotations, without

exception, were at the time of the Reformation proved to be forgeries, and are admitted even by the Romanists themselves to be a shameless and impudent imposture of the ninth century. On these grounds, then, the Anglican Church entirely rejects the authority of Rome, and claims for herself absolute independence.

In the second place, the Anglican Church, as a true branch of the Catholic Church, rejects those novel doctrines which are associated so much with the modern worship of the Roman Church, and which were entirely unknown in the Primitive Church of Christ.

Unfortunately, one has not the time to allude to more than one or two of them.

There has always been from the earliest times the Catholic belief in a "*real presence*" of Christ in the Holy Eucharist. Indeed, it was the belief of the whole Primitive Church. But that form of it known as "*transubstantiation*," which is the accepted doctrine of the Roman Church, is unknown to Holy Scripture, and violates the belief in the Eucharist being a Sacrament at all. Moreover, it was only received as a doctrine by the Roman Church in the year A.D. 1215.

Then there is the worship of the Blessed Virgin.

The Primitive Church knows nothing of this

We are told that the worship accorded to the Virgin is of a different kind altogether from that given to God; but such expressions as these, used by Romanists, hardly seem to prove the truth of that assertion.

“ Mary is our only refuge and help.” “ He who is protected by Mary will be saved ; he who is not will be lost.” “ Mary has only to speak, and her Son executes all.” “ Mary, mother of grace, do thou protect me from the foe, and receive me at the hour of death.”

Again, our Lord administered the Eucharist in two kinds, and for fourteen hundred years the Church did the same, for it was only in the year A.D. 1415 that the Roman Church departed from this primitive practice, setting aside the explicit command of Christ by refusing the chalice to the laity.

Then there are the Roman doctrines of purgatory, indulgences and intentions which are quite unscriptural and unauthorised by the Catholic Church for nearly fifteen centuries.

What shall we say of a Church which has departed so essentially from the doctrines and practice of the purest ages of the Christian Church ?

Simply this, That the title “ *Catholic*,” which she so arrogantly assumes for herself alone,

she has not the slightest claim to use at all.

Such was the condition of religion in this country at the dawn of the sixteenth century. The true faith was overladen with false doctrines ; superstition was rampant, morals had deteriorated.

The Anglican Church, as I have previously shewn, continuously protested, through many centuries, against all this.

At last, at the Reformation, the supremacy of the Roman over the Anglican Church was shattered, the latter purged herself from all modern and pernicious doctrines and accepted only those truths which had been adopted by the undivided Catholic Church.

It is very generally believed that prior to the Reformation the Church in this country was Roman Catholic, and that afterwards she became Protestant. Such a belief is historically incorrect. The Anglican Church to-day is the same Church as she was a thousand years before the Reformation. It is true she fell on evil days and accepted much of what is now known as Popery, but that did not make her Roman Catholic.

Suppose I have a flower-bed which has become overgrown with weeds, do I make it an entirely new bed when I eradicate the weeds?

Certainly not. Yet that is only what the Anglican Church did at the Reformation. She freed herself from all foreign usurpation and novel heresies, an act performed by the Church *herself*, an act which had the unanimous consent of the bishops, clergy, cathedral establishments, universities and Parliament, which, by the way, in those days consisted entirely of Churchmen, for Dissent was unknown. From the year 1534, when the Anglican Church through the Convocation of Canterbury and York declared "*that the Bishop of Rome hath no greater jurisdiction conferred on him by God in this Kingdom of England than any other foreign bishop*," she set about her reformation in earnest. The ancient ministry was left untouched, but the Book of Common Prayer was compiled, the Bible translated into English, and every doctrine which could not claim antiquity utterly repudiated.

This did not make the Anglican Church a new Church. If so, let us see the Act of Parliament which brought about that result. There is none.

Nor did the Anglican Church separate herself from Rome. The latter excommunicated the former, and was therefore guilty of schism.

Further, out of 9,600 clergy only 189 refused to give their allegiance to the new order of things, and they, of course, ceased to exercise their

functions in the Church—a procedure not only compatible with justice but one which is universally adopted to-day in every organisation of men. The line of bishops remained intact, and the cathedrals and parish churches remained in the same hands as before. In fact, it was the same Church after as before the Reformation.

In this connection, let me read to you a declaration signed by all the *Roman Catholic* bishops in England in A.D. 1856 :

“ British (Roman) Catholics are charged with entertaining a pretended right to the property of the Established Church of England. We consider such a charge to be totally without foundation. We declare that we entertain no pretension to such a claim. We regard all the revenues and temporalities of the Church Establishment as the property of those on whom they are settled by the laws of the land. We disclaim any right, title or pretension with regard to the same.”

This, you will agree, is most valuable evidence. And yet you find nowadays that the modern Romanist is taught the very opposite.

The Anglican Church being the true branch of the Catholic Church in this land, we are bound to regard the Romanist as a usurper. It was only in the year 1851 that she thrust her own bishops upon this country. Her ministerial orders are,

therefore, not English but foreign; and that the Anglican Church is no new Church dating from the Reformation has at one time been admitted even by the Pope, who during those strenuous times allowed the Romanist party to attend the reformed services in our parish churches for many years. Let us then be proud of this ancient Anglican Church, let us realise that her title deeds take her back to primitive times, and because of that fact let us maintain at all costs her claim to be considered a Catholic Church.

Believe me, Rome cares nothing for the sects. They cannot agree even amongst themselves, and are year by year breaking up into innumerable factions.

The Anglican Church is the greatest barrier to the advance of Roman claims.

Be faithful then to her, prize the means of grace she bestows on her children, value her privileges which through her Lord she offers to you, and ever regard her as your spiritual mother to bring you to the Cross of Christ.

SERMON IV

ANGLICAN CHURCH v. DISSENT

“Is Christ divided?”—I CORINTHIANS i. 13.

ONE of the saddest sights in the religious aspect of this country is the manner in which the Body of Christ—the Catholic Church—has been torn asunder by men who profess to believe in the name of Christ—a proceeding which has resulted in the formation of bodies or denominations external to the Church and which in the majority of cases are absolutely opposed to her policy and teaching. These are known as the Protestant sects.

There are some people, it is true, who profess to see in this state of things a sign of growth and enterprise on the part of Christ's followers ; but surely to the thoughtful mind a divided Christendom must display a condition nothing short of anarchy and confusion. Here on the one side, to use S. Paul's language, we find one body calling aloud “*I am of Paul,*” and on the other

"*I am of Apollus,*" and still a third, "*I am of Cephas.*"¹ Is it any wonder that as a result of all this a large number of men and women in every parish (very wrongly, of course) stands aloof from religion altogether? Is it any wonder that the evangelisation of the heathen is impeded at every step through these differences? Is it any wonder that the sceptic's sarcastic sneer is often well deserved, "*See how these Christians love one another*"? One of the greatest proofs of the Divinity of Jesus Christ was to be seen in the unity of the Church, for did not our Master, on the night before His crucifixion, pray "*that they may all be one, as Thou, Father, art in Me and I in Thee that they may also be one in us, that the world may believe that Thou has sent Me.*"²

And if it be true, as we are told, that division means life and reality, why was it not advocated by the Apostles?

Why was it not characteristic of the early Church?

On the contrary, this confusion, as we see it to-day, is abhorrent to the mind of Christ as we find it revealed by the Evangelists and Apostles. Listen to S. Luke in the Book of the Acts of the Apostles:

¹ 1 Cor. i. 12.

² S. John xvii. 21, 23.

*"The multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul."*¹ And still further he tells us that the marks of the true Church were to be seen in the united observance of the Apostles' *"doctrine," "fellowship," "the breaking of bread,"* and *"the prayers."* But that is not all. *"Is Christ divided?"*² asks S. Paul. Why, to the Apostle the very thought seems repugnant to the most elementary principles of the faith. To him, unity must be pre-eminent. *"It is by one spirit that we are all baptised into one Body."*³ It is in the Eucharist that *"we being many are one bread and one body, for we are all partakers of that one bread."*⁴

"Yes," says this great Apostle of the Gentiles.

*"There is one body and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling: one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism, one God and Father of all who is above all and through all and in you all."*⁵

In the light of such language as this, what possible justification can there be for Dissent? There is none. In fact it becomes a sin, and one from which in the Church's Litany we pray to be preserved when we say, *"From heresy and schism, Good Lord deliver us."*

The sight of Christian England to-day is to

¹ Acts iv. 32.

² I Cor. i. 13.

³ I Cor. xii. 13.

⁴ I Cor. x. 17.

⁵ Eph. iv. 4.

make one almost despair. Is it too much to expect that from the lips of every Christian man and woman should proceed those burning words of the Apostle, "*I beseech you by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment*" ? ¹

Now let us see how these different conflicting sects came into existence. And first of all let us not fall into the error of believing that it was through slight differences of opinion that their creation was brought about. We hear much nowadays about freedom of thought; and Dissenters, by their utterances, seem to imagine that they have a monopoly of it. Thought, however, just like action, needs to be curbed within the limitations of truth, otherwise it develops into licence. And within those limitations the Church has never restricted the opinions of her children. Dissent has arisen because slowly some of the foundation truths of our Faith have been assailed, and, owing to the fact that the Church remained faithful to the whole legacy of truth handed down to her, communities of men severed themselves from

¹ 1 Cor. i. 10.

the unity of the Church, formed themselves into organised bodies, maintaining that their action was one which received the sanction of Holy Scripture and claimed the approbation of God.

Previously we have shown that the Church of England is the true Catholic Church of this country despite all the arguments of the Church of Rome. The Reformation conferred a stupendous blessing upon the Church in giving her freedom from the tyrannous burden of Rome ; but let us remember that the Reformation was by no means an unmixed blessing. In this newly-found freedom men ran riot, the old land-marks of the Church were in danger of being destroyed, new and pernicious doctrines were promulgated and Dissent became possible.

The ark of the Church of England, however, weathered this stormy period. In spite of the trouble she still maintained her ancient ministry, she still clung to the faith of the undivided Church and her Sacraments, she remained, as she always had been, the Catholic Church of this land, with an origin which was not human but Divine.

Dissent, on the contrary, cannot claim anything but a human origin. Her ministers, she knows, have no Divine commission. She may, and she does, deny that commission to the priests

of the Church, but such assertions are futile with the testimony of nineteen centuries of the Church behind us. The Apostles and their successors alone had the power of ordaining men to the priesthood, and until the Reformation there is not one single instance of any man performing the functions of a minister of God except he had been canonically ordained by a Bishop of the Church.

Dissent says that any number of Christian men may meet together, call themselves a Church, elect one of their members to be a minister and settle all questions of faith and practice without any external interference. Yes, she may do all this, but certainly she must not be surprised if the Church completely ignores her. The Church can do no less. She lives in strict accord with the Bible and the primitive history of the Apostolic Church. From these pages we can substantiate every claim she makes as to her constitution and doctrine. But with Dissent it is absolutely different. She not only takes to herself the title of "Church," but we must always regard her as modern in her ways and in her history, and fundamentally unscriptural.

Suppose, however, we look at the subject from another point of view. I am in need of

the truth of God. I appeal to Dissent to help me in my research. "*What must I think of God?*" "*Are there Three Persons in the God-head, before each of whom I must bow in worship?*"

"Yes!" say some. "No!" say others—"God is but One."

"Is Christ God or merely man?" "He is God," say the many. "It is false," says the Unitarian. "*Can the blood of Jesus cleanse from all sin?*" "Yes," say some sects. "The statement is incorrect," says the Unitarian again.

"Who will be finally saved?" "All," teach some. "Only a few," say others.

"Will the wickedness of the sinner last for ever?" "For ever," say many. "Only for a time," say the Christadelphians.

"Is it right to have your children baptised?" "Certainly," say some. "Certainly not; it is entirely unscriptural," says the Baptist.

"Are the Sacraments binding on Christians?" "Yes," say the few. "They are useless," says the Quaker. And thus these conflicting answers meet us at every point.

Indeed, there is hardly an article of the Christian faith on which the sects can agree. And I am asked to believe that this is in accordance with the mind of Christ. But what do I find when I turn to the Church?

Above all this babel of indefiniteness, she always gives the same answer. Eastern, Roman, and Anglo-Catholics have one and the same Creed; and, although it may be true that there are points of difference between us, on all the *fundamentals* we are at one.

In every age, in every place, the Church has given the same answer to all these questions. In the bosom of the Catholic Church, then, my soul receives that peace which could never be obtained in the midst of the shifting uncertainties of the sects.

The Church, unlike these denominations which are of human origin, was called into being by the Master Himself; and while the former pass away or change their tenets, the Church ever lives on endowed with the same eternal marks and truths.

Like some great bulwark, she remains undaunted and inviolable, for she has been "*built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone.*"¹

It may be asked, however, "Why does the Wesleyan, for example, believe that Jesus is God, and the Unitarian deny the statement?" They both base their beliefs on the teaching of

¹ Eph. ii. 20.

the Bible ; and the Bible, containing as it does the Word of God, cannot possibly speak with two voices.

Here then are two beliefs opposing each other ; who is to decide which is the correct view ? Let me endeavour to answer this question.

And first of all, *Where did the Bible come from ? Who wrote the Bible ? Who selected the various books of the Bible, rejecting the spurious ones and retaining the true ?* There is only one answer—the Church. And Dissent has received the Bible from the Church and with her authority. But notice, the Bible was never intended to be placed in the hands of irresponsible people, to choose from its pages a faith for themselves. The Christian Church had been in existence twenty years before a single page of the New Testament had been written, and therefore she claims the power to teach *the Faith*. And she declares that the province of the Bible is to prove it. We cannot understand the Bible except from the Church's interpretation of it ; and for Dissent to accept the Scripture at the hands of the Church, and then to reject her teaching, is, to say the least, a piece of arrogant presumption for which nothing can be advanced in justification.

Thus Dissent, as a system, stands condemned from every point of view.

One particular type of Churchman thinks it a sign of broadmindedness to *patronise* all the sects alike. All that one can say of such a man is, that he must be very ignorant of the Church's true position and principles, and must have no deep-seated beliefs in religion at all. How can it be possible for any earnest man to be guilty of any compromise of principle? This so-called broad-minded Churchman pleads for a unity with Dissent which denies that Jesus is God, that there is any efficacy in the Sacraments, and, in fact, repudiates through its different denominations every single article of our Faith. Why, to stand on the same religious platform with such people as these would be to be guilty of unmistakable hypocrisy.

It would be to surrender everything we hold most dear, and cause to be poured upon us all the scorn and derision which honest men would most naturally think we had rightly deserved.

This is our attitude towards Dissent as a religious system.

The Dissenter, in the main, we treat quite differently. Multitudes of them belong to different sects because they have always been in ignorance, and have had no one to teach them. Others again remain in their small communities because they see the careless lives of Churchmen,

lives which from their increased advantages and privileges ought to be an example to the world.

To Churchmen I would say, Make yourselves acquainted with the magnificent history of your Church. Try to understand her doctrines and obey her commands, and you will find that one of the greatest arguments in favour of Dissent exists no longer.

Let us openly confess that in the past the Church has sinned, she has fallen short of realising the true dignity of her vocation. She has failed to call her children, as she might have done, to penitence and faith. This neglect on the part of the Church is undoubtedly the great apology for Dissent, though it is no justification when we look at the example of the Son of Man who, to the very end, remained steadfast to the Jewish Church.

The founders of the sects were without doubt men of God. God had a work for them to do. It may have been to witness for some great truth which the Church of that day was in danger of overlooking. But the mistake was made when these men rent the seamless robe of Christ by separating their followers from the visible unity of the Church.

Many of them are, indeed, baptised with the same baptism that we have been baptised with,

and love our common Master with a passionate zeal.

Let us pray that such people may enter the true fold of the Good Shepherd, the Church, and enjoy her full communion and richest blessings. Let us hope and yearn that they may reject the "*bits of the faith*" they now possess, and accept it in its fulness—in its true and beauteous proportion. Let us press upon them both by precept and example the realisation of the blessing of the Sacramental life.

Let us shew them that Sectarianism, as such, is an evil, nay more, a sin, and the greatest obstacle to the progress of Christ's Kingdom throughout the world.

But in addition let us shake off the apathy which warps so much the average Churchman's life.

Let us be more enthusiastic for Christ.

Let us shew the world that, if our privileges are unique, we are not unmindful of our obligations ; for we believe that the Church is a home whose limits are wide, whose perpetuity is assured, and whose builder and maker is God.

SERMON V

ANGLICAN CHURCH *v.* STATE

“Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord.”—
PSALM xxxiii. 12.

LET us now turn our attention to another relationship with which the Anglican Church is brought into contact, namely—the State.

But before we touch directly upon this subject, we need to take a very wide outlook of the position of the Church in this country. Throughout the length and breadth of this land, in the foulest slums or in the most sunny hamlets, the Church is always there. Every square inch of land in the kingdom is in a definite parish ; each parish being spiritually ruled over by a priest.

Every parishioner has a right to worship within his parish church, and has a claim upon the services of the priest.

This condition of things has existed for centuries, and it is therefore not to be wondered at that the roots of the Church are entwined round the very history and constitution of the country.

Though the Church is much older than the State, during their common life together they have been bound by ties of mutual alliance and affection. Through the Church the State makes its recognition of religion and God. The Church is thus regarded as the exponent of the Christian Faith to the people of this land, and, therefore, when the King or his representatives desire to perform any act of a religious nature, the Church is the medium used.

For example, the Archbishop of Canterbury crowns the King; a priest of the Church opens the sittings of Parliament by prayer; and the Judges attend the services of the Church at the opening of Assizes.

This, nothing more nor less, is what is meant by the Church being Established. So many mis-statements have been circulated on this and kindred subjects in the past that it is difficult nowadays to obtain a hearing when you speak the truth; but let us, in as few words as possible, see how the Anglican Church was established.

A very common idea is that many centuries ago the rulers of this country, desiring to "patronise" religion, chose the Anglican Church out of a large number of religious denominations because, in their view, it was the best.

How utterly absurd ! Why, the Anglican Church was inseparably associated with the State 900 years before Dissent was known. There was a united Anglican Church 150 years before there was a King of England ; for it was in A.D. 673 that the bishops and clergy formed themselves into one province under Archbishop Theodore, and it was not until A.D. 828 that the Heptarchy was welded into one kingdom under Egbert, King of Wessex.

The Anglican Church is the oldest institution in the country and preceded the formation of a Parliament by 600 years. In those early days every Christian in the country was an Anglican. Christianity permeated not only the private but the public life of men. Church and State grew hand in hand together, and so strong were the ties which bound them to each other that, as you know, English history is unintelligible if the Church is taken out of it. You will see, therefore, that the popular idea of the nation taking the Church and " establishing " her, in the modern sense of the word, has not a shred of evidence to substantiate it. There are men, however, who profess to see something immoral in this union of Church and State. Their cry is for dis-establishment.

The value of all their arguments in favour of

such a proceeding may be summed up in a very few words. They see the impossibility of their particular sect being "established"; and if they cannot, no one else shall.

Let us look at this interesting question from a higher standpoint.

Has it come to this—that a nation may not allow any recognition of religion at all? Surely the most elementary knowledge of Christ's teaching ought to convince us that it was the Saviour's will that God should be honoured by everyone and in every place. In the sight of God, nothing can be secular. Every relationship, every organisation of life, ought to be sanctified by the Spirit of Christ. The individual, the family—yes, and the nation—must proclaim its allegiance to God. God must be revered by the nation as a nation, then may it truthfully be said, "*Happy are the people that are in such a case, yea, blessed are the people who have the Lord for their God.*" ¹

I have tried to put before you in what sense, and indeed the only sense, the Church may be said to be "established," and I have also stated that multitudes of people will not accept the truth. Instead, they delight to call the

¹ Psalm cxliv. 15.

clergy "*Servants of the State*," "*State officials*." We are said to be "*State paid*"; our endowments are called "*National property*," and our cathedrals and parish churches "*belonging to the State*."

Needless to say, every one of these statements is grossly untrue.

Not so many years ago a Cabinet Minister spoke of the Anglican Church as a "*Creation of Law*." How absolutely unjust and wrong for any man in such a position so to deceive the public! Let me say emphatically that the Church is not a "*Creation of Law*." It is not an Act of Parliament Church, otherwise we should have some evidence for it on the Statute Book. The history of England alone conclusively proves that the Anglican Church existed before Parliament came into being, and thus (at the risk of repeating myself) the words "as by law established" mean no more than that the Church and her Faith is the recognised, sanctioned religion of the State, and that she is protected (like every Dissenting body) in the enjoyment of her rights, privileges and endowments by the law of the land.

I have been told that I am a servant of the State. This is a very remarkable statement. I have never yet had any official documents from

the State declaring the nature and scope of my duties. I was not appointed by the State to my present position, nor can the State dismiss me.

I have never yet received a penny from the State in payment of services rendered. I am no more responsible directly to the State for the fulfilment of my duties than is a Dissenting minister for the performance of his duties as regulated by his chapel trust deed. Surely this is a strange attitude for a "*servant*" to adopt!

Then I am told that the King and Prime Minister make our bishops; and that our religion, our Prayer Book, may be altered by Parliament. Is this so? Can the King make the Lord Mayor of London a bishop? Certainly not. His choice is restricted. He or the Prime Minister is bound to select a priest of at least thirty years of age, and then ask the Church to consecrate him to the order and title of a bishop. In every case the laws of the Church must be observed, and no man can be appointed under any circumstance if he be ineligible. The King does not consecrate the priest, that is the prerogative of the Archbishop. All that he does then is, after consecration, to place him in his position. Neither is our religion at the mercy

of Parliament. Who drew up our Book of Common Prayer or the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion? Not Parliament but Convocation, which is supposed to be a representative assembly of the clergy of the Church. Convocation drew up the Prayer Book and Parliament accepted it. Nor could Parliament make any alterations in the Book of Common Prayer now. That again is the work of Convocation, assisted by a newly-founded institution called the Assembly; and if Parliament presumed to ignore the authority of Convocation, then no loyal Churchman would countenance such an action. Let it be clearly understood that not only the Church but every denomination must submit to the laws of the land.

We hear a great deal nowadays about the so-called Free Churches. In what way are they free? Let them only try to alter their constitution or change a single chapel trust deed and they will find at once that they are in the clutches of the law. So much for their freedom!

Still it is perfectly true that the Anglican Church, even with her Assembly, must in the long run appeal to Parliament, though she is not handicapped as she was a few years ago. Why is this?

Considerably less than eighty years ago every

Member of Parliament had to be a *bona-fide* Churchman. To-day the constitution of Parliament is completely changed. Amongst its members may be found every shade of religious opinion from the Jew to the Agnostic. Eighty years ago a Church Bill brought before Parliament was discussed by representative Church laymen, and a terrible mistake was made by the Church, when Parliament was thrown open to everyone. She should then have insisted upon having the right to settle her own questions in her own way. However, the opportunity was lost, and we are now suffering through the short-sightedness and neglect of the then reigning Church officials. One knows how the enemies of the Church in Parliament oppose every measure which would make the Church more efficient.

What an exhibition of Christian charity !

Still we think that even this is better than disestablishment, for the evils attending it would wellnigh reduce this country to a condition of abject paganism. But what of the endowments of the Church ? Where did they come from ? How are the clergy paid ? From the rates or taxes ?—not a penny. Yet thousands of people believe that the clergy are State paid. Army, Navy and Air chaplains are, of course, paid by the State, because they are engaged by the

State ; but let it be clearly understood that these chaplains are not all priests of the Anglican Church. There are Roman priests and Dissenting ministers who are precisely on the same footing and receive for their services payment from the State.

May I quote the words of a late President of the Wesleyan Conference on this subject : “ *The Church of England is indeed established and endowed, but it does not derive a farthing of revenue from public taxation.*” And speaking of endowments, he proceeds, “ *They are with very few and special exceptions all of them of private origin, the fruit of voluntary Christian zeal and liberality. They differ in no respect as to their nature from the endowments which during the same period have come into the possession of other Christian denominations in this country.*”

How is it possible for people still to believe that the Church's property is national property ? And for the nation, at the instigation of dishonourable men, to deprive the Church of her belongings would be a flagrant and wicked act of confiscation and robbery.

Then there is advanced the question of tithes which many enemies of the Church declare it hurts their consciences to pay. How did they

arise? Let us suppose a man owned an estate and decided to give a tithe or a tenth part of the income derived from it to the purposes of God. The tenants of the various farmsteads are told that for the future they must only pay nine-tenths of their rent to the landlord, and the other tenth to the incumbent of the parish for his services at the Church. There seems nothing very iniquitous in such a scheme as this. On the contrary, it is deserving of the greatest approbation. The iniquity is shewn when the tenant, after paying his rent to the landlord, refuses to pay the remaining one-tenth to the church on the plea that he has conscientious objections to the faith. Such a man is a hypocrite, for he knew all the conditions under which he took the farm, and every honest man must admit that it is only just that the law should assist the incumbent in obtaining that which is lawful and right. Disendowment would not abolish tithes, for when the Irish Church was dis-established and disendowed, as also the Welsh Church, both Churches were deprived of their tithes, but they are still paid to the Government. So, too, when the monasteries were suppressed by King Henry VIII., what happened to the endowments and tithes? To the relief of the poor? No. They were given to the King's courtiers,

and many a noble house to-day is thriving on the spoils of the Church.

We are sometimes told that the endowments of the Church have a tendency to sap the springs of Christian philanthropy, that Churchmen are not as generous as Dissenters, and that it would be a blessing in disguise to be rid of them. Such talk is the purest nonsense and cant. During the last century close upon 50 millions have been expended on the building of new churches, the formation of new bishoprics, and for the payment of her 6,000 assistant clergy. Every year she finds about eight millions voluntarily for Church work; and in work, quite outside that which may rightly be termed spiritual, she helps the hospitals and almost every conceivable object of charity with wide-spreading arms. The hospitals in London receive from the Anglican Church more than seven times as much as all the other religious places of worship put together.

Disendow the Church and much of the money now given to outside societies would be taken from them and given to the Church for her upkeep. But endowments have another value.

Under a purely voluntary system, where a minister has to look for his living from those to

whom he gives his office, do not tell me that his position is entirely one of freedom !

He must be sorely tempted to suit his doctrine to that of his paymasters, or run the risk of losing his stipend. Thousands of dissenting ministers are groaning under this awful tyranny, and can you wonder that chiefly because of this many secede to the Anglican Church every year ? The Anglican priest, on the contrary, has nothing to fear. His stipend is largely independent of those to whom he ministers, and thus he can preach the truth bravely and boldly without fear or favour.

But there is still another point in favour of endowments.

In the east of London Dissent, both Protestant and Roman, is almost unknown. Why ? Because the poor people cannot support their religious houses. What chapels they formerly had are now closed, or have been taken over by the Anglican Church as mission rooms ; for this Church of ours, on the testimony of impartial witnesses, is the only religious body ministering to the spiritual needs of that vast multitude of souls. Dissent flourishes chiefly in the well-to-do districts, but the Church, helped to a certain extent, though by no means wholly, by her endowments, has a mission to every one

of Christ's children. In the most terrible slums, where even the Salvation Army has never put foot, there are devoted priests of the Church, carrying aloft the torch of Salvation and pointing to these social outcasts the way to eternal life. And now I must close.

There are numerous questions which might be asked and answered, but time will not permit me to deal with them.

Still there are several propositions which need re-emphasising.

(1) The Anglican Church is the ancient Church of this country, a branch of the true Catholic Church, existing before King, Constitution and Parliament, and entirely independent of Rome.

(2) This Church was initiated by Christ ; the sects were created by men, and are often called after their human founders.

(3) This Church was not established by any Act of Parliament, but grew up with the nation and permeated the national life.

(4) The endowments of the Church are the accumulated gifts of her sons and daughters, half of which have been given since the Reformation, and thus for the State to confiscate them would be robbery and sacrilege.

(5) The Anglican Church, even if she were dis-established and disendowed, would still be the

Catholic Church of this country—the direct descendant of that group of Apostles who, in the upper room in Jerusalem, were strengthened by the Holy Spirit of God on that memorable Day of Pentecost for spreading the Gospel throughout the world.

SERMON VI

SACRAMENTAL GRACE

“ God who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son.”—HEBREWS i. 1, 2.

IN these words we have a clear indication as to how God makes His will to be known to man of His creation.

Of one thing it is quite certain that rarely does He speak or act directly to any ordinary human being, but almost universally does He use some means for making His will to be known, a means which brings with it conviction of mind and soul. Such a process do we understand as sacramental.

We speak and speak correctly when we say that God gives us our daily bread, and that we have need to thank Him for His universal Providence. But at the same time we are fully conscious that the food does not come to us *directly* from His gracious hand. A moment's reflection

will show that He generally works by “*means*”; and if that is so in the physical world, even so is it in the world of Grace.

All life is sacramental. It is, as one writer has said, “*the law of life*”; wherever we look around us, life is always revealed through an outward and visible sign.

The difference between a stone and a seed is obvious. The stone represents no more to us than a piece of matter, whereas the seed is something beyond dull lifeless mass, even a unit which contains the very power of life. In other words, it is the simplest form of a sacrament. But more so is this brought home when we turn to the spiritual life of man.

We are bound to recognise that our Divine Lord adopted such means of grace throughout His earthly ministry.

His miracles were rarely performed without first of all engrossing the attention of at least His disciples by some act which caused a vivid impression.

The woman must touch His garment before she received her blessing. Jairus' daughter must be raised from her couch of death by the Saviour's gracious hand before the opening of her eyes betokened life. Only after the Son of Man had put his fingers into the sufferer's ears and

touched his tongue was it a fact that his ears were opened and he spake plain. And we could multiply these cases.

But when Christ's hour had come and He must leave this world He did not change His method. He left a Church, a visible one, which consisted of a community of men and women bound together in union with Him through Sacraments.

It was not enough that they should understand His Life and marvel at its purity, nor believe that they might petition Him for heavenly pardon for their sins—they must be joined together in a wonderful union through the Sacrament of Baptism and Holy Communion. These are Christ's great means of grace—each of which is an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace.

And although these two Sacraments were ordained by Christ Himself and are both generally necessary to salvation, there are lesser ones, truly sacraments, which do not carry with them so profound a meaning nor possess so far-reaching consequences.

In the Thirty-Nine Articles found in our Book of Common Prayer may be seen the nature of these other five, *Confirmation*, *Penance*, *Orders*, *Matrimony* and *Unction*. Yet they have their value in the spiritual life of man, and have been

accepted by the Christian Church from time immemorial.

With this introduction to the value of the Sacraments in the spiritual life of man, let us recognise that we are surrounded on all sides by multitudes of so-called Christians who would dispense altogether with these means of grace, and for reasons best known to themselves. They do not need them, so they say. They clog the freedom of a purely Christian life and hinder its facilities. "*Gratia non ligatur mediis*" is a theological commonplace. God is not bound to any channels through which His grace may flow, and there are many instances of such action on the pages of Holy Writ ; but, as we have already seen, these are very much the exception to His almost universal rule.

But while admitting that God at His pleasure may alter His method of procedure, it does not in the least follow that His servants may do the same. He most decidedly is not tied to means ; but His children must learn, as one of their principal duties, the meaning of obedience.

Now let us place before us a fundamental axiom.

Grace, of whatever kind or degree, can only come from God.

What is grace ? It is that heavenly gift

which means the indwelling of God within the human heart—the working of the Holy Spirit. That which comforts, strengthens, and sanctifies the souls of men is not any definable influence but the possession of a living personality in whom we live and move and have our being. It is an impossibility, therefore, for *man* to give grace. Only from God Himself may this greatest of gifts flow.

Nor are the Sacraments themselves *sources of grace*. They are channels along which God's blessings flow, but more than that they cannot be. To assume more from them than that, is to detract from the majesty of God and the infinity of His providence. As Hooker says, "*They that receive grace by sacraments or with sacraments, receive it from Him (God) and not from them.*"

Let us proceed another pace in our enquiry. It will be generally admitted that "*God gives grace freely.*" The very word "*gratia*" implies this. If it were otherwise, grace could no longer keep its name. Nothing that man can do, therefore, can merit or deserve God's grace. This truth is by no means universally believed amongst professing Christians. It is quite generally admitted that the *works* which we perform, however great in magnitude, can never earn the blessing of God, but the application of

repentance and *faith* are entirely different, for they at once cause the torrent of His riches to fill the soul. Such a belief in the popular sense is quite wrong. Repentance and faith no more than good works can *directly* avail in the purchase of man's salvation.

Let me make this truth perfectly clear by means of an illustration. I will liken my soul to a house built with the necessary complement of windows. I presume that the sun is shining brilliantly without. Suppose that I pull down all the dark blinds attached to every window, the whole house is plunged in darkness. This phenomenon would certainly not justify me in proclaiming that the sun had ceased to shine. No, the darkness has been brought about through the down-drawn blinds forming an obstacle to the accession of light. That is the cause and none other.

Similarly, when I think of my living soul, God's grace either directly or indirectly is perpetually shining within me and gladdening my soul with heavenly blessings. Yet it is possible for me to shut out that light if I choose to do so, by the gift of free-will which is mine. I fall into grievous sin and delight to continue in it. What is this but the pulling down of the blinds of impenitence which prevents the gift of heaven

from reaching me? It is not that God has ceased to care for me or rejected me for ever. Certainly not. His ever gracious Presence continually surrounds me, but I am unable to feel it because of my stony attitude towards Him. I prefer a life of sin and thus I set up a barrier of *impenitence* between myself and God.

And what is true of sin is equally true where my faith in Him fails me. Unfaithfulness like impenitence acts like blinds to the windows of the soul, to shut out the radiance of God's grace ; and the only way to gain the peace of heaven and everlasting comfort to the soul is to practise penitence and regain my faith when by these acts I draw up the blinds and receive the sunshine which so persistently surrounds me. Thus it is not I who win grace ; my penitence and faith can no more accomplish such a deed than the performance of good works. The grace of heaven is a free gift from His Almighty Majesty and is totally independent of any action on the part of man to achieve it. All that man can do is to *hinder* grace.

By way of digression, we can see in this argument a complete answer to those people who deny that a little child can receive the gift of Sacramental Grace in Holy Baptism. Such people affirm that inasmuch as the child is

unconscious of what is happening, and that penitence and faith are required from the recipient before Baptism, therefore the Church is inconsistent in her precepts if she attempts to grant the grace of this sacrament. There is no inconsistency if we bring back to mind what has recently been said. The child has never committed sin nor broken the laws of faith, and, in using the metaphor once more, it cannot possibly have drawn down the blinds. No blinds have, as yet, been placed to the windows. It therefore follows that the child is even more fitted to receive the fullness of God's grace than any adult can possibly be, even though he approaches the Eternal Mercy seat clothed with the robes of penitence and faith.

Thus as a natural deduction God cannot extend His Grace, either directly or indirectly, through sacraments, on any of His children who are unprepared for it.

The antagonism towards the use of sacraments has probably arisen, in the first instance, through the promulgation of much loose teaching. The Salvation Army, for example, has repudiated the use of these means of grace altogether. It is not a very intelligent thing to have done. Possibly this group of men and women—you cannot call them Christians because they are

unbaptised—imagined that greater exterior results should have accrued from the application of the sacraments: they expected something little short of magic, like unto their noisy conversion; and, because it was not forthcoming, these precious possessions of the Church were cast away as useless. But what is the result? To-day we look upon the Salvation Army as a social regenerator which has entirely usurped any of its religious fervour which once it might have held.

The Sacraments of the Church constitute the highest form of worship, but no man must think for a moment that they make the path to heaven any smoother or shorter.

The doctrine of Sacramental Grace is simply a belief that God, in the dispersion of His gifts, uses almost always definite Means. Along these means, or channels, He usually causes His grace to flow, but no difference is ever made in the constitution of the heart on which He works effectually, nor the moral and spiritual qualifications which He demands.

The excellences of eternal grace may be lost upon any human soul which has not risen to the right height of preparation. But to approach in sin is to court spiritual disaster.

This is clearly pronounced in the Twenty-Fifth

Article of the Anglican Church to which reference has been made before.

“ In such only as worthily receive the same (sacraments) have they a wholesome effect or operation, but they that receive them unworthily purchase to themselves damnation, as S. Paul saith.”

SERMON VII

THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY BAPTISM

“ Repent, and be baptised every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.”—ACTS ii. 38.

It is an unquestionable fact that many people who submit to this Sacrament of Baptism do so under the impression that it is merely a test of their obedience, but as to deriving any benefit or virtue from it, they will tell you that the whole thing is preposterous, and that the doctrine of the Catholic Church of God on this important subject is not only opposed to Holy Scripture, but takes away from the merits of the precious death of Christ. In the face of so serious a charge as this it behoves us to examine carefully this question. What, then, does the Church teach? In the first place she teaches the doctrine of Baptismal Regeneration. There is no doubt of this, for in the short exhortation

and thanksgiving prayer which follow the Baptism in the Church's office for Holy Baptism we find these words, "*Seeing now . . . that this child is by Baptism 'regenerate.'*" "*We yield Thee hearty thanks . . . that it hath pleased Thee to regenerate this infant with Thy Holy Spirit.*" Thus it is clear that connected in some way with Baptism, the Church teaches that there is a Regeneration.

You will be well aware also that before anyone is baptised there is, with one notable exception,¹ a profession of faith and promises of repentance and obedience. And there are some people who say that if there be any regeneration at all, it is owing to these and not to the Baptism. Suppose we were inclined to believe this, just see where it would lead us. We should hold that God's blessings, nay, more, the salvation of the child, depended upon the earnestness and sincerity of the sponsors—a belief for which no evidence can be advanced from the Gospel. But we have a clear and definite proof, so far as the Church is concerned, that if there be a regeneration, it is through the Baptism. For when in the case of illness we baptise a child privately there need be no sponsors, there is no profession of faith, no

¹ Private Baptism of an infant.

promises of repentance and obedience, and yet we speak of such a child in the concluding prayer as being *regenerate*, just as we do of the child who is brought to the Church and publicly baptised. We have, therefore, arrived at this stage : that the Church teaches that in Baptism there is a Regeneration. Another word before we proceed. If an adult be brought for Baptism, regeneration need not necessarily accompany the act. You will observe this by reading the office for adult Baptism in the Book of Common Prayer. Two conditions are required—the essential conditions for all God’s blessings—repentance and faith. If the candidate be repentant and expresses his faith, then the Church in Baptism proclaims him to be regenerate. But what do we mean by Regeneration? There are people who use the word in a modern and unscriptural sense, and confuse it with the word *conversion*. In Holy Scripture the two words are quite distinct, and be it noted they are never confused in the Book of Common Prayer.

The word Regeneration is only found in the New Testament twice—(1) in S. Matthew’s Gospel,¹ where our Lord refers to the condition

¹ S. Matt. xix. 28.

as being that of the Christian Dispensation ; (2) in S. Paul's Epistle to Titus,¹ where it is unquestionably connected with Baptism—the washing, or laver, or bath of Regeneration. In S. John's Gospel ² we also have that prominent reference to the “ new birth ” and the term made synonymous with Baptism. Conversion, on the other hand, in the Revised Version, only occurs once,³ and means to be “ turned round.” It refers to the outward and visible change which takes place when a man turns from darkness unto light, from heathenism to Christianity ; in other words, the change which accompanies repentance. Let us, then, not confuse the two words : their meanings are entirely different, and have never been made to mean the same until comparatively recent times.

Now, why should it be so very difficult to believe that Baptism can effect a Regeneration ? Remember, this Sacrament is one of two of Christ's own appointments, and therefore must be of the greatest importance. All that the Church says is that this Sacrament is the channel through which God acts, and we know that God does work by means. The water of Jordan in itself had no inherent efficacy to cure leprosy, yet

¹ Titus iii. 5.

² S. John iii. 3-5.

³ Acts xv. 3.

God allowed that same water to be the means of curing the leprosy of Naaman. Why may not the water of Baptism convey God's blessings now to the one who comes in faith and penitence? We are told it is a superstition. If it be a superstition who is responsible for our holding it? Surely Christ, for He taught us, through that mysterious conversation with Nicodemus, to connect Baptism with Regeneration. "*Ye must be born again.*"¹ "*Except a man be born again—born of water and spirit—he cannot enter the Kingdom of God.*"² The apostles S. Peter and S. Paul also taught the same doctrine. The gift of the Holy Spirit was absolutely dependent on men being baptised: "*Repent, and be baptised, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ . . . and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.*"³

If we are in error in believing this doctrine, we have this comfort, that the Apostles must have been in error also. And, further, do not think that this is any one man's private interpretation of the Scriptures. No! it has been the belief of Christians for centuries, it is accepted by the major part of Christendom now—a fact which ought at least to make us give the doctrine a respectful consideration. I can imagine, how-

¹ S. John iii. 7.² S. John iii. 6.³ Acts ii. 38.

ever, some people accepting this truth up to a certain stage, and then refusing to allow its applicability in the case of infants. Their contention is this : " I can understand a man being regenerated in Baptism when he has expressed repentance and faith, but how is it possible for me to believe that the same benefits are given to a child who is absolutely unconscious of what is taking place ? " This question I know troubles a great many people. Can the Church supply an answer ? She can. Any adult when brought for Baptism expresses faith and penitence. And for what reason ? Is it because *they* are capable of *earning* God's grace ? Surely not. It is without doubt an axiom of our faith that all God's blessings are incapable of being claimed through man's merits or virtues. All that man can do is to hinder the free transmission of grace by *impenitence* and *unbelief*. If, then, he expresses faith and repentance he merely pulls down the barrier of impenitence and unbelief, and is therefore affected by the rays of God's love. But an unconscious child is unable to raise any barrier against God's grace, because of its incapability of committing actual and wilful sin, and is more assured of the blessings of regeneration than any adult can possibly be. And inasmuch as we know that Christ at least on one occasion took little

children in His arms and blessed them, so we believe that even now He blesses unconscious children in this Sacrament of Baptism which He himself ordained.

Baptismal Regeneration, however, is not the only supposed error which is attributed to the Church in her teaching on the subject of Baptism. We are told in and through Baptism she teaches the remission or forgiveness of sins. Well, she does teach that doctrine in more than one place in the Book of Common Prayer. In the office for Confirmation, one of the prayers contains these words : “ Who hast vouchsafed to regenerate these Thy servants by water and the Holy Ghost, and hast given unto them *forgiveness of all their sins.*” We are further told that this is a deadly error, inasmuch as it denies the efficacy of the sacrifice of Christ ; and, therefore, in the light of this charge, we are imperatively called upon to defend the Church’s language. Let us in the first place notice this important fact, that such teaching is not peculiar to the Anglican Church, for it was held most strenuously by the Primitive Christians. Turn to the Nicene Creed, which in its present form was almost finished in the year 381 A.D. As concerning Baptism, it contains these words : “ I acknowledge one Baptism

for the *Remission of Sins*,"—so that you see, more than 1,500 years ago this particular doctrine which we are now considering was just as much a part of the Church's teaching as it is to-day.

This doctrine of the Church may be expressed, then, in the following words :

(1) In the case of infants, Baptism conveys the remission of original or birth sin only, for actual sin they have never committed.

(2) In the case of adults, Baptism conveys the remission of all sins, both original and actual, only when repentance and faith have been demonstrated. If we can prove the second proposition, it will be unnecessary to examine the former, inasmuch as the argument for infant regeneration is directly applicable here. Do the Scriptures supply any foundation for this doctrine of the Church? Let us enquire. Before the advent of Jesus, John the Baptist came "preaching the baptism of repentance *for the remission of sins*. His baptism did not convey the gift of the Holy Ghost, men were not regenerated, but to those who came in penitence, they received the forgiveness of all their sins. This statement is no invention, it is taken direct from the Bible. And if such a blessing can come from John's baptism, can we believe that anything less came from that of Christ? Again, the

words I quoted as the text, the words of S. Peter, uttered on the Day of Pentecost, absolutely confirm the statement of the Church, for he says, "Repent, and be baptised every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the *remission of sins*," and in the following verse he states, "for the promise is to you and to *your children*." Surely, in the face of so convincing a proof as this, why do not these people, instead of denouncing the Church—which has simply taken the words of Scripture as she finds them—why do they not denounce the Bible itself? Their actions then would have some show of consistency. Lest, however, there should be the slightest doubt left, let me give you another reference. You remember when S. Paul was converted, it took place miraculously. He was from that moment a changed man. Christ even spoke to him from heaven. And yet God sent a message by Ananias to him saying, "*Arise and be baptised and wash away thy sins*."¹ Does it not pass your comprehension how people professing to be Christians can deny the very words of God, and say that Baptism is unnecessary after conversion, and that the former does not convey the forgiveness of sins?

¹ Acts xxii. 16.

It is not very difficult to understand why there should be so much opposition to the Church's doctrine. It has undoubtedly sprung from the fear lest a formal act should usurp the place of a spiritual change in the heart of man. But why should there be this fear? God cannot forgive sin, nor can Baptism wash away sin, if impenitence and unbelief retain possession of a man's soul; but we should like to remind those who disparage this Holy Sacrament that obedience is essential for salvation. Disobedience, just like impenitence and unbelief, frustrates the grace of God. If we are told to be baptised, we *must* be baptised, for Baptism, in addition to being a means of grace, is no less a test of our obedience.

There are, however, one or two other objections which directly concern us in the consideration of this subject, and which it would be well for us to notice. In the Church's Catechism the child is taught to say that in Baptism he is made a member of Christ, the child of God, and an inheritor of the Kingdom of Heaven.

Now some people object to this language, but once again we have the words of Holy Scripture to support us: for S. Paul, writing to the Corinthians says: "*By one Spirit are we all baptised*

into one body," ¹ and again, "Ye are the body of Christ and severally members thereof," ²; or, in his Epistle to the Ephesians, he says: "*Having cleansed the Church by the washing of water by the word,*" ³ we ought to act in certain matters like our Lord, "*Because we are members of His body.*" ⁴ Notice the close connection of the washing or baptism with the membership. So much for the proof that in Baptism we are made members of Christ. Now for the other two. In S. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians we read: "*For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptised into Christ have put on Christ,*" ⁵ and he proceeds still further and says: "*And if ye be Christ's, then are ye heirs (inheritors) according to the promise.*" ⁶ Also in his Epistle to the Romans he says: "*And if (we be) children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ.*" ⁷ In the light of these texts of Scripture, I maintain that every reasonable man must conclude that the language of the Catechism is only an explicit statement of what is found in the Bible.

But once again do we find the old difficulty, of these same benefits being conferred upon uncon-

¹ 1 Cor. xii. 13.

⁴ Eph. v. 30.

² 1 Cor. xii. 27.

⁵ Gal. iii. 26, 27.

⁷ Rom. viii. 17.

³ Eph. v. 26.

⁶ Gal. iii. 29.

scious children in Baptism, brought before our notice. For instance, one writer states the case thus : 'While believing that in Baptism an adult is made what the Catechism states, he adds, "There is not one word in the New Testament which even suggests in the slightest degree that spiritual blessings are, or may be, conveyed to an infant by a rite of which he is unconscious." What a foolish statement ! Was it not Christ Himself who blessed little children ? They were all unconscious of what was being done to them, and if the blessing Christ gave them was not a spiritual blessing, what was it ? It surely could not be anything else. To hold any other view would be to ignore the Divine nature and mission of our Blessed Lord. This one instance affords a striking example that unconsciousness need be no bar to the reception of grace.

Again, it is said "that an unconscious child cannot by any act be brought into a new relationship towards God." What profound ignorance ! Was not that result achieved by the Jew when he submitted to the rite of circumcision in a state of unconsciousness, *viz.*, on the eighth day after birth ? And can we believe that Baptism, which is necessary to Salvation, an ordinance ordained expressly by Christ our Saviour, is less efficacious than circumcision ? If we

can, then, so far as children are concerned, it would have been better for them had they lived under the Old Jewish Covenant rather than under the Christian, and the Scriptures must be wrong which tell us that the latter is a better covenant.

No, children, before they have committed any actual sin, are tainted with the sin of Adam—they are children of wrath. But if sin abounds, does not grace much more abound? There must of necessity, then, be some deliverance, and this deliverance, this new relationship towards God, is found in the sacrament of Holy Baptism.

In these days in which we live, there is a tendency to disparage both Holy Baptism and Holy Communion. The Sacraments are too often regarded as meaningless forms. Let us at all times then avoid the cunning and crafty arguments of men, however plausible they may be, and search the Scriptures for the Truth. We do not need the negations of that Protestantism, so beloved by those who have separated themselves from the Church, to teach us the Catholic Faith. Nor do we need the conclusions of Science and Philosophy to reveal to us the Will of God. We may be told that the latter opposes first this doctrine and then another, but let us

remember that these will not save us—*only Christ*. You, too, may refuse to be taught by the Church, you may still hold your opinions and ideas, despite all argument to the contrary, as to the necessity and efficacy of this Holy Sacrament, but what will they avail you as you stand before the judgment seat of Christ? Christ is our Saviour now, in the future He is to be our Judge. He it is Who said: “*He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be condemned.*”¹ “*Except a man be born of water and of the spirit, he cannot enter the Kingdom of God.*”²

¹ S. Mark xvi. 16.

² S. John iii. 5.

SERMON VIII

THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY COMMUNION

“ This is My Body.”—S. MATTHEW xxvi. 26.

WITH the Sacrament of Holy Baptism, this great Sacrament of Christ's Body and Blood holds the unique position of being ordained by Our Lord Himself. It has several titles—the Mass, the Eucharist, the Holy Communion and the Breaking of Bread. At other times it is called The Sacrifice.

The Master, knowing the phenomenal greatness of this Institution, the infinite comfort it would ultimately bestow on the world, made ample preparation for its initiation.

The first occasion took place about one year before its full ordination. He was in the wilderness, teaching and preaching to a concourse of people numbering more than five thousand. Whatever provisions of food they had brought with them had all been exhausted. He was

warned of the people's condition and, taking from a boy standing near a basket holding five barley loaves and a few small fishes, He appeased their hunger.

This wonderful miracle gave our Blessed Lord the opportunity of speaking for the first time on this Sacrament of His Love.

Just as He had fed the bodies of these thousands of men, so equally was it possible to feed their souls. They must labour for the "*true bread from heaven.*"¹ He was "*the living Bread.*"² "*He would give them His Flesh to eat.*"³ What a strange doctrine ! There is no need to believe that any great number of that multitude, save a few standing with the disciples, had listened to this teaching. Some of these, however, began to murmur, "*How can this man give us his flesh to eat ?*"⁴ and the reply of our Lord was, "*Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His Blood, ye have no life in you.*"⁵

As a result of this exposition many forsook Him ; they turned their backs on the Prince of Life. And Jesus let them go. If He had been speaking in type or metaphor, do you think for one moment He would have lost those men ? Surely

¹ S. John vi. 27. ² S. John vi. 51. ³ S. John vi. 56.

⁴ S. John vi. 52.

⁵ S. John vi. 53.

not. Turning to his disciples, he said, “ *Will ye also go away?* ”¹ And Peter replied, “ *Lord to whom shall we go, Thou hast the words of Eternal Life.* ”² This closed the episode,

A year passes by, and we gaze into that upper room in Jerusalem on Maunday Thursday evening, the night before the Day of His crucifixion. Christ with His chosen ones is sitting round the festive board in commemoration of the Jewish Feast of the Passover. This commemoration was both a Feast and a Sacrifice. An unblemished lamb had been slain, without any of its bones broken, and roasted for the feast. Our Divine Lord was to be the very Paschal Lamb in a truer and higher sense. Immediately after the Feast was ended, He would initiate the Christian Passover. Taking some of the unleavened bread which lay upon the table and a cup of wine, He blessed and brake the former and gave it to the Twelve saying, “ *Take eat, This is my Body. Do this in remembrance of Me.* ” Likewise with the consecrated Cup. “ *This is My Blood.* ”³

This, put very briefly, is the history of the Eucharist.

From that day until now, over a period of nineteen centuries, has the Catholic Church given

¹ S. John vi. 67. ² S. John vi. 68. ³ S. Matt. xxvi. 26.

to this Sacrament the premier position amongst all her rites and ordinances. And the reason is obvious. It is a perpetual sacrifice in which we "*shew the Lord's Death till He come.*" ¹

If, as we believe, the Holy Eucharist is the very centre of Christian worship and represents the only purpose for which the Christians ever assembled themselves together for meditation and praise throughout the whole of the days of the New Testament, then we must be struck, as we gaze upon the lives of many who profess and call themselves Christians now, how lamentably they have fallen short of the standard of primitive Christianity.

The overpowering desire of the Church should be to raise this Sacrament to its pristine glory.

It is the greatest gift mankind has ever received.

Therefore, to dare approach the Altar from which we may receive the Body and Blood of our Divine Master needs *Preparation*.

To accept the Sacrament unworthily is, in the language of S. Paul, to "*eat and drink condemnation to ourselves, not discerning the Lord's Body.*" ²

Our preparation, which is a severe one, is found

¹ 1 Cor. xi. 26.

² 1 Cor. xi. 29.

in the Invitatory Words as shewn in the Church's Office for Holy Communion.

It comprises four duties : *Repentance, Faith, Love, and Obedience*. Let us give each of these the briefest consideration.

(1) *Repentance of Sin*.—Sin is regarded by many people in these days with very little concern. It is merely a misfortune ; it cannot be helped. But is not this result brought about through looking upon sin and its awful realism from the human standpoint instead of from the plane of God ? The presence of sin in the human heart obscures the brightness of the Father's Face, and the ecstasy of a Godlike condition of virtue can never again be obtained, nor can the soul be fitted to receive the celestial blessings of heaven, until that soul has meekly repented of its former sins, and pleaded for that gracious absolution which flows in rivers from the mercy-seat of God.

(2) *Faith*.—The faith which God requires must be irrevocable. In this great Sacrament we must believe in the Eternal Presence of Christ. Our position must be a logical one. We cannot worship Christ as God if He is no more to us than an historical personage, nor without that never-ending life, as clear and strong as ever it was, and Who, in a very real, spiritual, and

objective sense, makes His Presence to be known in the Eucharist.

(3) *Love*.—This is nothing less than a fullness of heart for the Triune God—one which sees in every act a fulfilment of His Divine Will. The love which we are asked to display is one akin to that of Heaven. Its greatness in extent lies in the fact that beyond the Eternal Father, from Whom it emanates, it stretches out in ever-widening circles to draw our fellow-men under the protecting wings of a mighty Saviour.

(4) *Obedience*.—We must know what it is to live a life of chastity. Discipline is the agency bestowed to raise our heads like men. Obedient to God's call, we face life's trials heedless of earthly consequences; we pass into that spiritual condition of intense illumination—a place or condition of peace.

Yet these in themselves cannot earn our redemption. They are merely instruments for undoing the mischief which alienation from God has caused.

Freed from these wounds and weaknesses, we shall then arise like new men, cleansed and purified, all-fitted for the Heavenly Feast.

What do we understand by the *doctrine of the Eucharist*, the meaning of the Body and Blood and their reception at the Altar?

Throughout Christendom at the present time there are multitudes of men who claim to be followers of Christ who have the most confused and **E**rroneous ideas of the meaning of this Doctrine.—The Doctrine of the *Real Presence*. It is a wonderful doctrine, we admit, and for a full and complete meaning of it, it undoubtedly baffles the human intellect. Still that can never be brought forward as an excuse for its rejection. There were numbers, even of the Primitive Church, who, if they did not deny it in words, refused to accept it by their actions. There were they who, in the language of S. Paul, “*did not discern the Lord’s Body.*”¹ They came to this Blessed Sacrament in a state of sin, and therefore ate and drank judgment unto themselves. They did not discern nor discriminate that the Body was present. Now what do we mean by this word “*discerning*”? It cannot mean “*seeing*,” because no man can see the Lord’s Body in this Holy Sacrament with his outward or physical eye. The only possible meaning we can give to it is that anyone who comes to the Eucharist in unrepented sin does not distinguish the Lord’s Body from ordinary or common food. He treats it with no

¹ 1 Cor. xi. 29.

more reverence than he would his daily bread.

He ignores that Christ is present or disbelieves this great truth of the Church. Thus it follows that by his irreverent eating and drinking he draws a judgment on himself. Further, this same Apostle says, "*Whosoever shall eat the Bread or drink the Cup of the Lord unworthily shall be guilty of the Body and Blood of the Lord.*"¹ In other words, he commits the same kind of sin as the Jews who crucified Jesus.

Notice how naturally this Apostle speaks of the Lord's Body !

It would be impossible for anyone so to describe it who did not believe in a Real Presence. If it were not a Sacrament at all, but merely bread and wine—a belief which many hold to-day—merely elements to remind us of the Eternal Sacrifice on Calvary, how would it be possible to become guilty of the Body and Blood of Christ ? Such people would be eating irreverently and sinfully, for they would be committing an act of disrespect towards something which was holy, but hardly guilty of the Body and Blood of our Lord !

Yet if this Holy Sacrament is, as the Church

² 1 Cor. xi. 27.

teaches, the Body and Blood of Christ given under the forms of Bread and Wine, then a man who approaches the Altar without due preparation may be said to "*crucify the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame,*" ¹ and to "*count the Blood of the Covenant with which he was sanctified an unholy thing.*" ² But let us remember this, he can only do this if the Lord's Body be present, not otherwise. It will be seen, therefore, that here, as always, the doctrine of the Church is the only one which fits in with the language of Holy Scripture.

This is because the Holy Ghost, Who inspired the Bible is the same Spirit Who guides the Church into all truth.

But we must still follow S. Paul in the further enunciation of this doctrine. Listen to his words: "*The Cup of Blessing which we bless, is it not the communion (or partaking) of the Blood of Christ? The Bread which we break, is it not the communion of the Body of Christ?*" ³ S. Paul did not say, the Cup which we *drink* or the bread which we *eat*, but quite different expressions, *bless* and *break*—the acts of blessing and breaking—because it is only through those priestly functions that the Sacrament is made. In the

¹ Heb. vi. 6. ² Heb. x. 29. ³ I Cor. x. 16.

upper room in Jerusalem on Maunday Thursday night, our Divine Lord showed His disciples by His words and manual acts how His Body and Blood could be given by His Church to a sinful world ; and through the intervening centuries the priests of His Church have obeyed the Heavenly Word.

In what sense, however, may it be said that His Body is present ? He is present not only in His Divinity, for in that sense He is eternally present in all places and at all times, but in His Humanity also. If we think of Christ as God and Man, located in heaven, then we can speak of Him as *visibly* and *naturally* at the right hand of God. Naturally—in that heaven is His natural abode, but not that He is there in His natural Body, for since His Ascension He has discarded His natural Body for a spiritual one. There is now no natural Body of Christ. In the Eucharist He is invisible to normal eye, because of its *spirituality* ; in other words, the Body is *super-physical*. And this is abundantly proved if we glance once more at the initiation of the Feast. Our Blessed Lord was then present in His *natural* Body. His disciples did not, nor would they eat of that Body ; it was an impossibility. What then ? They received His Spiritual or Heavenly Body.

Still further, this expression was no figurative one. The presence is not subjective but objective. The Body and Blood are present on the Altar not because of our confession or faith, but entirely through the consecration of the elements by the priest, though the prepared heart is unquestionably necessary for its reception and power of blessing.

The seed in the parable was real, essentially like the Body in the Eucharist. The preparedness of the ground had nothing to do with the reality of the seed, neither has the condition of the human heart anything to do with the fact that the consecrated element of bread is now the Spiritual Body of Jesus Christ in an objective sense.

Do not let us fall into the error of believing that when we speak of things "spiritual" we mean something nebulous, imaginary, with no true reality. If that be our conception, then what must we think God to be? He is a Spirit. Our own bodies in heaven will be spiritual, no longer subject to the limitations of this world, and capable of enjoying a much fuller reality than anything we have known here. No! the objective presence of Christ is necessary if we would accept the full doctrine of this Divine Sacrament. To believe that Christ is

present in a mere "subjective sense," that He comes and envelops our lives and enlightens our souls, is to force us to the conclusion that S. Paul, as shewn in so many quotations, has rather over-estimated the importance of the Sacrament. This, however, we know he has not done, for he is quite aware of the "subjective" presence of Christ when he tells us "*Know ye not, your own selves, how that Jesus is in you, except ye be reprobates?*"¹

Nor must this doctrine, which is held by the Anglican Church and is in agreement with that of the undivided Catholic Church, be confounded with the doctrine of Transubstantiation of the Roman Church. That doctrine is at the same time both illogical and unscriptural. Without entering into any lengthy dissertation on this particular doctrine, we may notice that the Roman, in his eagerness to interpret this wonderful mystery in an ordinary and natural sense, falls into error. He says that the bread, or for that matter any object, has two parts, an inner part, which constitutes its being, and known as *the substance*, and the outer part, known as *accidents*, which give to the object its colour, taste and smell. At the time of the consecration, he

¹ 11 Cor. xiii. 5.

says, that there is a complete change in the substance ; from being bread it is now the actual, natural body of Christ which was crucified on Calvary. Such an interpretation is fundamentally opposed to what we have hitherto propounded. But what about the "accidents" ?

They remain present throughout the whole of the consecration. You can see them for yourselves when you receive the Body and the Blood at the time of the Administration. Are the "accidents," "the accidents" of the Body and Blood, or what are they the "accidents" of ; since, according to his interpretation, the Bread and Wine are no longer present ? He will not admit that they are the "accidents" of the Body and Blood, hence his pitiable confusion.

Further, according to this explanation, the Mass ceases to be a Sacrament. You know the definition of the latter. It is "*an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace.*" The Roman will not allow that the "accidents" are features of the Bread and Wine, which he maintains have passed away ; thus he makes out the Eucharist to be something beyond a Sacrament, something which was never intended by our Lord.

The Anglican Doctrine of the Real Presence is quite different from this. She says that "*under*

the similitude of Bread and Wine, we do eat and drink the Lord's Body and Blood." She recognises the mystery which surrounds it all. Like the doctrine of the Incarnation and Holy Trinity, the Real Presence is one of those eternal mysteries which we shall never comprehend in its fullness on this side of the veil.

The eternal truth has been revealed to us, and we accept it.

By kneeling when we receive the Sacrament the truth is more solemnly forced on us. To kneel is an act of worship.

If only bread and wine be present, as other Christians would have us believe, then it is sinful to kneel for its reception. We kneel because we believe that Christ is truly present; and He Who in His first miracle converted water into wine can surely at every Eucharist make bread and wine into His Body and Blood.

This, at any rate, is the doctrine of the Church and its foundation is laid on Him Who is not only the Way and the Life, but essentially the Truth.

SERMON IX

THE SACRAMENT OF CONFIRMATION

“Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection ; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.”—HEBREWS vi. 1, 2.

I DESIRE to bring before your notice the important subject of Confirmation ; and this appears all the more necessary, inasmuch as many people have very erroneous conceptions as to the meaning of the Sacrament, and attach to it an interpretation which it was never intended to teach. If we look at the Office for Confirmation, as found in our English Book of Common Prayer, we find there are two distinct divisions. In the first place we have, on the part of the Candidate, a renewal of the Baptismal Vows and an earnest desire to fulfil them for the future with the help of God. And, secondly, we

have the ordinance of “laying on of hands” on the part of the Bishop, which conveys the gift of God’s Holy Spirit. We have, therefore, two distinct and separate ordinances which, although existing apart from the earliest times, have only been joined together in their present connection since the Reformation. Confirmation means *to strengthen*, and thus, when we say that a person has been Confirmed, we mean that he has been strengthened from on High through prayer and the imposition of hands. Now, it need hardly be said that there is very little, if any, objection to the first part of this Sacred Rite, in which the renewal of the Baptismal Vows is undertaken. Though not actually of Divine appointment, we find such religious practices sanctioned in the Word of God, and everyone must admit that it is an exercise of the greatest spiritual value. But against the “laying on of hands” the case is very different. Both in the Old and New Testaments we find numerous instances of this practice, and yet the Sacrament of Confirmation is by many held up to ridicule, and in some quarters denounced as so much formalism and superstition; for we must remember that it is not the renewal of vows but “the laying on of hands” which constitutes the Sacrament. It will be profitable, then, if we

examine into the difficulties these people have to contend with ; for much of this hostile opposition would unquestionably be done away with, if the real facts were placed before them, and the caricature of the truth they have attributed to the Church were replaced by the true doctrine she has ever taught.

If “ the laying on of hands ” be wrong, by what authority do we continue the custom ? Is it a modern innovation, or has it come down to us from early Christian days ? If the former, it is certainly time we seriously considered whether we ought any longer to retain the service within our Book of Common Prayer. But such is not the case. We first find mention of it shortly after Christ’s Ascension—between A.D. 35-40, and those who were responsible for initiating it were none other than S. Peter and S. John. You will find the reference in Acts viii. 15-17. Philip, the deacon, had been baptising—he was not an Apostle, and therefore could not confirm—he sent for the two Apostles Peter and John, who, when they arrived, prayed for the baptised people, that they might receive the Holy Ghost. Then we read “ *that when they laid their hands upon them, they received the Holy Ghost.* ” ¹ In a later chapter ² we read of S.

¹ Acts viii. 17.

² Acts xix. 6.

Paul performing a similar ceremony, and pronouncing that the gift of the Holy Spirit was bestowed ; thus we are justified in pointing to these examples as the source and origin of this Sacrament.

We may be told that even if the Apostles did lay their hands on the baptised it does not follow that the Bishops of to-day possess the authority to do the same ; but that is not the point. The people we are considering denounce Confirmation on any terms ; and under these circumstances the force of logic would lead them to no other conclusion than that the Apostles in instituting Confirmation were initiating an ordinance which was fundamentally wrong. But the "laying on of hands," not perhaps with its Christian meaning, had existed long before the days of the Apostles. We read of Jacob and Moses, and of the Incarnate Son of God, Who laid His hands upon little children and those in affliction when He desired to succour and to bless. It is evident, then, that the Apostles in following this ancient custom did so in imitation of their Divine Master, but looked for other and spiritual results which had been specially revealed.

Now, why did the Apostles institute Confirmation ? You will remember that before Christ

ascended into heaven He gave the promise to His disciples that He would send the Comforter¹—the Spirit of Truth, who should guide them into the way of truth; and in virtue of that promise can we believe that in instituting Confirmation so soon after Christ's departure from them they were doing something He had never contemplated? But, further, it is quite possible, although not recorded, that Christ had given the Apostles directions on this and kindred subjects, for we read that between the time of the Resurrection and Ascension He continually spoke to them of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God, *i.e.*, His Church.² In any case, we are bound to believe that the Apostles, in laying hands on the baptised, were on the one hand only doing what Jesus himself had told them; or, on the other hand, they were but following the promptings of the Holy Spirit in the carrying out of God's purpose towards His children.

But we may be told that this ordinance is nowhere commanded in so many words on the page of the New Testament. True; and the reason for this silence is not very difficult to find. The Book of the Acts of the Apostles was not written until about twenty years after Confirma-

¹ S. John xv. 26.

² Acts i. 3.

tion first began to be practised, at a time when this ordinance was universally recognised throughout the Church. Confirmation is mentioned but not commanded, simply from the fact that no Christian in those early days ever thought of doubting or disregarding it. When men were baptised they proceeded directly afterwards to be confirmed, because Confirmation was the completion of their Baptism ; and inasmuch as it was so universally acknowledged, we see ample reason for the omission of any strict command, for such an injunction *then* would have been superfluous and unnecessary.

But let us not think that although Confirmation may be useful, it is not necessary. It is most necessary. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, in the words of the text, gives us a list of the foundation principles of Christianity. There are six. Repentance, Faith, Baptism, Laying on of hands, Resurrection of the Dead, and Eternal Judgment. You see the "laying on of hands," or Confirmation, stands on the same level with the other five "principles"—doctrines which no one would deny are of the utmost and most vital importance. Thus, when we are distinctly told it is a "fundamental," what right has any man to say it is unnecessary? Confirmation is one of the foundations of Christ's religion,

and must therefore have come from God, "*for other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.*"¹

The authority for Confirmation, then, which we have just considered has been taken wholly from the Bible, and I ask you if you can attribute any reason, save that of ignorance, to those who attempt to belittle the importance and necessity of this Christian Sacrament.

So much, then, for that aspect of the question. Let us now turn to another. We are told that when the Apostles administered this "rite" it was essentially for the purpose of conveying certain miraculous gifts, *i.e.*, the interpretation of tongues, and the power of prophetic insight, and not for the transmission of the gift of God's Holy Spirit. Now this is quite wrong. We know from the history of the Primitive Church that when the Apostles laid their hands on the Baptised, they prayed for the Holy Ghost, and those confirmed received the Divine Spirit. But it is also true that the confirmees at the same time received certain miraculous gifts—and for what reason? Simply that they might be signs or proofs to the great mass of unbelievers around. It might be all very well for the Apostles to say that those Confirmed had received the Holy

¹ 1 Cor. iii. 11.

Spirit—but where was the proof? The proof was seen in the super-physical manifestation. These miraculous gifts, we know, were but temporary; but was there not something behind it which was essential and eternal? The Apostolic age was an age of miracles, for miracles had a definite purpose to fulfil in the Divine Councils, but when that age passed away, and miracles were no longer performed, how was it that Confirmation was still practised within the Church? If the sole purpose of Confirmation was to dispense these miraculous gifts, then when the gifts ceased, Confirmation ought to have fallen into abeyance. As a fact it did not, simply because its main purpose was to bestow the gift of the Spirit on the faithful recipient, and because of that, this ordinance has been handed down through successive centuries even to the present day.

Notice, therefore, that before anyone is confirmed, prayer is essential, prayer for God's Holy Spirit. The Apostles prayed before they laid their hands on the candidates whom Philip presented in Samaria; and this has ever since been observed in the Church. The Bishop, clergy, candidates, and congregation all unite in prayer for the gift of the Spirit. Who would dare to say those prayers are useless? Was it

not Christ Who said, "*If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?*"¹ Prayer, then, is necessary, and is part of the rite. The Bishop now proceeds to lay his hands on the heads of the candidates. The Bishop himself has no inherent power to bestow any gift. He is the means which God employs for His purpose, and nothing more.

Nor must we think that Confirmation conveys the blessing mechanically. A candidate who presents himself before the Bishop with an unbelieving and impenitent heart receives no grace at all, for God never forces His favours upon any man. But on the contrary, if penitence and belief are present, that candidate receives a blessing of which it is impossible to gauge the extent and importance. This in as few words as possible is the meaning of Confirmation. But at the outset I said that in the Anglican Church we have placed in front of the Confirmation itself another ordinance, *viz.*, the renewal of the Baptismal Vows. In reality it is a service of preparation for what is to follow, and is obviously of great spiritual value.

I have previously said we have no Divine

¹ S. Luke xi. 13.

authority for this portion of the Service, yet we must never forget that our Blessed Lord left His Church the power to decree rites and ceremonies.¹ Hence the reason for the introduction of this particular service. Special cases under certain circumstances require special treatment, and these Christ left to be considered by His Church under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Take the case of a child baptised in infancy. At that baptism the child's godparents answered not for themselves but for the child. They promised in the child's name to renounce sin, to practise faith, and to become obedient; and it was their duty to see that as the child grew up he was properly instructed in the nature of the covenant that was then made with God, and to see that he realised and understood the responsibilities which even now and throughout the whole of his life will rest upon him. On attaining to years of discretion he is asked to renew those vows—not to enter into any further responsibility, nor, as some people foolishly believe, to take their sins off their godparents (for everyone born into this world is responsible for his own sins whether he is confirmed or not). I say the child is asked to come forward as a dutiful and loving child, as one who understands the nature

¹ S. Matt. xviii. 17-18.

and consequence of wilful sin, to promise with his own lips that, with the help of God, he will earnestly strive to perform what was promised for him so many years before.

No wonder that we value so highly this former part of the Confirmation Service, for in it the candidate renews the solemn promises of his baptism, ratifying and confirming it with his own lips in the presence of God and the Church. So far from making any sacrifice ourselves in Confirmation, it is God who desires to give us of His Holy Spirit, and to help us at a time when we are in sore need of His strengthening Arm.

With S. Paul can we not say : “ *By myself I can do nothing, through Christ I can do all things.* ” ¹ And what a grand sight it is to see a young man or woman with the expression of true penitence on their lips. “ Lord, I am sinful, yet from henceforth I desire to live for Thee. Give me strength to fulfil the vows I took upon myself at Baptism—Renunciation of Sin, Faith in Thee, and Obedience to Thy Holy Commandments.” Yes, what a grand sight it is to see such an one coming in penitence and faith to Confirmation, believing that in that Holy Sacrament will be found the strength so essentially necessary for the salvation of souls.

¹ Phil. iv. 13.

SERMON X

THE SACRAMENT OF PENANCE

“Whosoever sins ye forgive they are forgiven, and whosoever sins ye retain they are retained.”

—S. JOHN XX. 23.

THE Sacrament of Penance, which the Catholic Church of God has from her very inception practised, is the offer of a balm to the distracted soul of man, who seeks for peace.

It implies the recognition that sin, sin in all its hideousness, is rampant in the world, and is for ever striving to alienate the heart of man from his fellow-men, but, more terrible still, from the heart of God. It means the joys of forgiveness.

Even in primitive times there was an universal longing to be at rest and unity with the man whom the sinner had unlawfully punished, and this intense yearning of the soul has grown through successive ages until it has found its noblest presentation in the religion of Jesus Christ.

We look out upon the world to-day and we

find this instinct for forgiveness shewing its face in the life of the little child. The knowledge that wrong has been committed and that no happiness is possible until the consciousness of pardon is revealed is an every-day experience. So, too, as we pass on through every stage of life. All human happiness is bound up in the folds of forgiveness. Very quickly do we learn that there lies in our possession a power—an unique power of dispensing pardon.

The stricken soul, conscious of the harm it has done to us through the voice of scandal and calumny, first begins to shew signs of its guilt by evasion. Conscience-harried, it looks in vain for peace. The outlook of life puts on a drabness which cannot be pierced by any effort of its own. It looks in vain for hope, for light to illumine the soul. On the contrary, a voice of conscience calls and points out the only way to rest, but only through sorrow for sin and a pleading for forgiveness at the feet of him whose character has been so ruthlessly defamed. And when the words of pardon have been bestowed, how instantly is the change effected. The sinner sees once more the radiance of the hills, for the garments of sin fall from off his person as disused robes. His heart is filled with joy, for he confronts the world as a man forgiven.

And on him who so graciously has given his absolution, does it not create wonderful attributes of chivalry, nobility and greater love? He knows that the power is his to give, and to hold back; and by his decision he may make or mar a human soul.

All that is needed in this universal act of forgiveness is the unquestioned sincerity of the penitent. The recognition of the need of confession of sin, and the nobility of extending the gift of pardon, are the inherent qualities common to humanity.

Into this world where, through the sin of man, heaven has been lost, comes the gracious personality of the God-Man—Jesus Christ. In this curious instinct of man to forgive his neighbour, He would promote a method of expansion. He comes to found a Church, and its members shall be called the “*sons of God.*” He will have us know as never before what are the consequences of a life of sin. We came into this world heirs of sin, and for our emancipation from its punishment it necessitated the only-begotten Son of God to take our fleshly garb and undertake the task. Throughout those three short years of His earthly ministry, in season and out of season, He preached that everlasting duty, “*Repent ye and believe.*”¹

¹ S. Mark i. 15.

We marvel at the lack of understanding of those who heard His words, and yet repudiated Him. Still this eternal truth of forgiveness no man despised, for it harmonised with that human instinct implanted within man's heart at the time of our first parents, and thus can never die. Salvation therefore is built upon the fact that the sin which taints the soul must be for ever quenched if we would regain our Paradise and enter the perennial glory of our Lord and of His Christ.

In precept and parable Jesus taught this gracious doctrine. But still more in His acts does He demonstrate this power of Love. In the house at Capernaum, where lay a palsied man, they crave the exercise of that great healing power to restore to him who was sick his long lost gifts. Notice the procedure.

He does not say, "Arise, take up thy bed and walk," but, "*Son, thy sins be forgiven thee.*" The Scribes immediately accuse Him of blasphemy. They say, "*Who can forgive sins but God only?*" Yet Jesus is not the least perturbed. His personality made the words both easy and possible. If man could forgive his fellow-man, then could Jesus, as God, forgive the sins committed against God's eternal Majesty. But more than that, Jesus was in the world as Son of

Man, commissioned and entrusted to do the Will of God, and therefore He replied, "*but that ye may know that the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins (He saith to the sick of the palsy), I say unto thee, arise and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house ; and immediately he arose, took up his bed, and went forth before them all.*" ¹

Once again, do we hear those glorious words, "*Thy sins are forgiven thee ; thy faith hath saved thee, go in peace,*" ² when the sinful Magdalen comes to the house of Simon, weeping for her sins and bathing His sacred feet with her tears. And what was done for these individual people was eternally performed for all mankind at Golgotha. It was through the shedding of His Blood on the uplifted Cross that eternal redemption was procured. In this way both Sin and its consequence, Death, were conquered. Sin by the death of Christ upon the Cross and Death by His Resurrection to everlasting life. Mankind, therefore, has the guilt and power of sin eternally conquered by *Faith* in the Redemption.

But where shall we, as penitent sinners, seek God's pardon and absolution ? Where shall we be assured that God's forgiveness is ours ?

¹ S. Mark ii. 5-10. ² S. Luke vii. 36-50.

Trace the movements of this Son of Man. On the Resurrection night, and on its Octave, He seeks His Disciples in the upper room at Jerusalem and shows the wounds on hands and feet and side—marks of the Sacrifice which had won the *At-one-ment* with God.

Notice what follows! His own earthly life was drawing to a close. The power of Absolution must remain within His Church. He says, "*As My Father hath sent Me, so send I you. Receive the Holy Ghost, whosoever sins ye forgive they are forgiven, and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained.*" ¹ And through His Apostles He gave this power to His Church for all time. His own words prove it: "*Lo! I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.*" ²

To the penitent sinner, therefore, pardon and forgiveness are found within the Catholic Church—the Church of His own foundation.

The doctrine of Penance, or Forgiveness of sin, or Repentance and Absolution, has always enjoyed the distinction of a Sacrament within the Church from the moment that Christ Himself passed on to His Apostles the authority to cleanse sin.

Every priest within the Church, whether it be the Orthodox, the Roman, or the Anglican

¹ S. John xx. 23.

² S. Matt. xxviii. 20.

Churches, receives from the officiating bishop the power to absolve sin. Men may be found who dispute the authority, but it is a remarkable fact that from the time of Our Lord until the Sixteenth Century of the Christian era the voice of denial was never heard. It is clearly shown in the Office for the Ordaining or Ordering of Priests in the Book of Common Prayer.

The Ordinal is another name for the Office which gives to every priest his Orders. Here are the exact words spoken over each minister as he kneels before the Bishop for "*the laying on of hands.*"

"Receive the Holy Ghost for the office and work of a Priest in the Church of God, now committed unto thee by the imposition of our hands. Whose sins thou dost forgive they are forgiven, and whose sins thou dost retain they are retained."

Here is an authority given by a bishop to a newly-ordained priest based entirely upon the words of our Divine Lord which have come down to us unimpaired through nineteen centuries.

The words of Absolution are in constant use, each time we enter God's house for the purpose of holy worship—whether it be for Mattins or Evensong or the Eucharist; nay more, in the first Exhortation in the Office for Holy Communion, where the priest is authorised to

encourage the people to come to the Sacrament, occur these words, "*if there be any of you who by this means cannot quiet his own conscience, but requireth further comfort or counsel, let him come to me . . . and open his grief, that by the ministry of God's Holy Word he may receive the benefit of absolution.*"

There remains, however, a more striking example in the "*Office for the Visitation of the Sick.*" Here the priest is ordered to urge the sick person to make his confession, and actually gives the priest the words of Absolution which he must use.

"*Our Lord Jesus Christ Who hath left power to His Church to absolve all sinners who truly repent and believe in Him, of His great mercy forgive thee thine offences, and by His Authority, committed to me, I absolve thee from all thy sins, in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.*"

Thus stands the authority for the doctrine of priestly Absolution as a Sacrament within the Church of the living Christ.

It now only remains to be shewn upon whom this precious gift may be bestowed. It is not left to the caprice of the priest to administer this Sacrament to all and sundry. As in the other Sacraments, so also in this, the worthiness

of the administering priest plays not the slightest part in its efficacy. On the part of the sinner, however, the heart must be prepared by an inner spiritual examination before it is at all possible to receive this redeeming grace.

In other words, the priest must be assured of the sinner's repentance, and repentance consists of three parts, *viz.*, Contrition, Confession and Amendment.

Contrition is the foundation upon which a sincere penitence is built.

What does it really mean? It is sorrow for sin. It is more; it is a hatred of sin brought about only through a passionate love of God. Think of the condition of a human soul which, like the prodigal son, realises the enormity of the gulf which separates itself from heaven, which recognises that nothing short of the Passion and the Cross of a God-Man could undo the ravages of sin, sin which even now prevails—and what man, unless perchance all human traits be lost, can fail to sink into the humiliation of spiritual grief? Contrition is the breaking of the heart of any man, an overpowering sadness which would dry those tears upon the Face of his Divine Lord if only it could stay a second Calvary.

Contrition, however, leads to Confession or

the truthful acknowledgment of sin. Confession is not merely a personal recognition of that alienating factor, sin, which separates men from God, so far as itself is concerned ; but a recognition that all sin is a direct attack upon the holiness of God. Thus the words of Confession must plead the soul's utter hopelessness, until the Heavenly Father whispers the words of Infinite Love.

And God demands Confession as a condition of Absolution.

" If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins." ¹

A willingness to confession is the truest evidence of the reality of contrition.

The Anglican Church invites all sinners who cannot otherwise make their peace with God, to reveal the sin which causes the grief before the priest, in order that they may receive the benefit of spiritual pardon. One fails to understand why so many Christian people shrink from the use of this Sacrament. In times of ill-health we naturally consult the physician ; in the intricacies of our worldly business we seek the advice of the lawyer ; but when our souls are disturbed we never dream of approaching what Bishop Cosin calls the "*Sacramental*

¹ 1 S. John i. 9.

Confession " to obtain the advice of the priest whom Christ has appointed in His Church to direct the ignorant, confirm the doubtful, and comfort the weary.

We have already seen how our Blessed Lord, the Founder of the Church, of which we profess to be loyal, has given His priests power and authority to absolve from sin all who make a genuine confession, and He surely meant them to use that privilege. Further, let us remember that, strictly speaking, to absolve is not to forgive, although the two words are constantly used indiscriminately. God alone can forgive. He alone fills the sin-worn soul with heavenly brightness.

To absolve is to unloose the bands which sin has placed around the soul, to remove the obstacles for the reception of grace. When Lazarus was raised from the dead, Jesus Christ used these particular words, "*Loose him and let him go.*"¹ So also God, Who pardons the penitent, bids the priest in absolution to loose him and let him go.

And then, we come to the last requirement—*Amendment*. It is sometimes called the Satisfaction or the Forsaking of Sin. It is the crowning test of genuine repentance and a sure evidence of a true contrition.

¹ S. John xi. 44.

An amendment is the steadily sustained resolve to sin no more, and is, in a certain sense, a compensation for past iniquity. Let us, then, very humbly and very penitently, struggle to make our earthly life like unto the pattern of our Saviour's life.

His was one entirely free from sin, and in His Church He gives us the means, through the Sacrament of Penance, of making an approach to the purity and holiness of His own.

The pitfalls of sin are about us on every side ; we continually, through our perversity, endanger our salvation.

Let us listen to His voice :

" I came to seek and to save that which was lost." ¹

We must follow that Voice, accept Christ's gracious gifts as deposited with His Bride, the Church ; learn to recognise that none of His Sacraments can ever be of no avail. Then must we advance through earth's dark way into the glorious light of that heavenly Kingdom where the celestial call will quicken all our spiritual impulses, *" Servant of God, Well done ! "*

¹ S. Luke xix. 10.

SERMON XI

THE SACRAMENT OF ORDERS

“And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord on whom they believed.”—ACTS xiv. 23.

ONE of the most distressing features of the religious life of this country is the lack of unity and cohesion amongst those who call upon the Name of Christ. Instead of there being, as was our Divine Master's intention, one united Church, presenting a bold front, and assuming an aggressive action towards the countless forms of sin which assail her—she is rent and torn in every conceivable direction.

Much of her energy is expended in contravening the usurpations and heresies which are the natural resultants of intolerance and ignorance; and the principal object for which she was founded, in very many cases, is entirely lost sight of.

How far removed is the present status of the

Christian Church in many phases from what it was in Apostolic days must be apparent to the most casual and superficial observer. And there is little cause for wonder when we find devout and humble-minded followers of the Cross striving for reunion, and praying for that internal and external unity which would do more than anything else to stem the torrent of indifference and unbelief, which by its violence would seem to jeopardise its safety. The Church is sometimes blamed as being one, if not the chief, instrument in bringing about this unhappy condition. Like the Roman and the Orthodox Church of the East, whose ministry is identified in a three-fold Order, the Anglican Church presents a similar formation of her own ministers. She claims that for the Catholic Church of Christ the three-fold order of the ministry is the one and only type which can be traced in an unbroken line right down the centuries from the day of her birth.

Let us go back in thought and look upon the primitive Church in the early days of her infancy. Her Master had but recently left her, yet there had been left behind Apostles—possessors of the Gospel; and only through them and their successors could the Message of Divine Grace be delivered to a world steeped in sin.

It was therefore necessary to establish some sort of organisation which in its first-fruits must be recognised as the creation of the Church. But the Church was not formed for a day or a generation. It was not a grouping together of men and women who loved their Master and believed Him to be God, so that as a privileged circle they might constantly meet together and render Him worship. No! from that nucleus of earnest souls there should be an universal spreading of the knowledge of Jesus Christ, and this obviously could only be effected by the formation of a Church with an attendant Ministry.

The Apostles, like all other men, could only live their allotted days on earth. If the Church had to pass down the centuries in ever-widening circles, carrying the glad tidings to those heathen lands that were waiting to receive them, it became clear that the Church must possess a Ministry.

The Apostles saw in their own Jewish Church, towards which at this time they were intimately associated, that her ministry was a threefold one—*High Priest, Priest and Levite*.

Even in those three short years, when they were being educated and fitted to undertake that gigantic task of being the first pioneers for

the establishment of the Kingdom, they doubtless saw the shadow of the coming reality when they observed how in His formation of Divine ambassadors to man, there was perfectly visible *the Master, the Twelve, and the Seventy*.

The history of the Catholic Church from the first great Christian Pentecost, when as a result of that wonderful sermon of S. Peter "*Three thousand were added to the Church*,"¹ shews that her Ministry is threefold, like unto the pattern of God. And never was there the slightest alteration for at least fifteen hundred years of the Christian era, when her ministers were not designated under the titles of Bishops, Priests and Deacons.

The doctrine of the Church which reveals this truth of her Ministry is known as the "*Apostolic Succession*," and any other ministry which finds its source and origin outside that succession is rightly esteemed to be an invalid one. Reluctantly, therefore, the ministers of all Protestant sects come under this category, for the breakage of the succession must leave us in doubt as to the passage of the flow of Divine grace.

We are asked, however, to prove the necessity of the Apostolic Succession, and a contention is

¹ Acts xiii. 41.

sometimes raised that the threefold Order of the Ministry is nowhere in the New Testament specifically stated as having emanated from the Apostles themselves.

We might easily retort that if the origin of this Christian Ministry came not from the teaching of the Twelve, from whence did it first arise?

The writings of the earliest Fathers speak of none other ministers in the Church of Christ than the bishops, priests and deacons. This certainly ought to be sufficient evidence for the proof of the truth which we maintain. But with many people it is not so. They must see this doctrine proved to the hilt on the page of the New Testament, and anything short of this they will not allow.

Let me remind such people that, though it is no easy matter to give them all they ask, it is by no means impossible. Still, before we proceed, there are a few points of genuine historical worth which must be held by both parties before it is possible to proceed.

It must be admitted that the Church was in existence, administering her Sacraments and teaching the people before ever a word of the New Testament was penned. The historical Book of the Acts of the Apostles was a history

of the formation of the Apostolic Church, and the Epistles contained Apostolic advice and comfort not to heathen people but to the communities of Christians to whom they were addressed, and who had been silently taught by the ministry until they were well versed in the polity and faith of the Church. It is hardly a subject for surprise to find that a clear and concise statement on many subjects bearing upon the very fundamentals of the Church is hardly ever found.

The fact was that these Churches, scattered over Asia and Eastern Europe, knew all about such matters. It was only with the full knowledge of all such details that they had been persuaded in the first instance to accept the Church as their spiritual Mother and join her through the Sacrament of Baptism.

Thus it was that the earliest writers, outside the New Testament, speak of the threefold Order of the Ministry and that no man had ever been allowed to minister within the Church unless he had been sent by the highest officer within the Church, namely the bishop, and not even then except by the *laying on of hands*. In no part of Christendom and in no age did the Church depart from this law. Even the unbelieving Gibbon asserts: "*No Church without*

a bishop has been a fact as well as a maxim since the time of Tertullian and Irenæus."

It will be seen, therefore, that Episcopal ordination has been proclaimed by the voice of history from the beginning.

Bearing these points in view, let us see how the voice of Scripture will help us in this investigation.

Very early in the life of the Church we read from the Book of the Acts of the Apostles that the Apostles themselves created a new Order quite unlike their own, one whose principal function was "*to serve tables.*" Seven men were appointed, and they were known as Deacons. Even for this humble ministry it necessitated a formal ceremony—there were prayers and an imposition of hands by the Apostles alone.¹

Later on in this same book,² we read of a *new and second order*, the "*elders*" or "*presbyters*," in the Mother Church at Jerusalem. The historian never satisfies our curiosity by giving us the slightest account of the first formal ceremony, but he leaves us to believe that these elders were familiar officers in the daily life of the Church, performing their duties as they had been commissioned by the Apostles. One matter cannot escape our notice. A little later

¹ Acts vi. 6.

² Acts xi. 30.

in the book, when we meet with Paul and Barnabas at Antioch in Pisidia, we read, "*and when they had ordained them elders in every church and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed.*"¹ The point to be noticed is that no mention is made of the "laying on of hands." But a ceremony such as this, which was used at the ordination of the deacons, and even at the confirmation of the laity,² could never have been omitted at the ordination of the elders. This is just such a case where familiarity of the ordinances led to only a partial description.

A very striking passage is found when S. Paul sends for the elders of the Church at Ephesus, and addresses them: "*Take heed therefore unto yourselves and to all the flock over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the Church of God which he hath purchased with his own blood.*"³ For the first time does the word "overseer" or "bishop" creep in.

It would be beyond the present necessity to give a list of references where direct mention is made of this *second* order of the ministry, the *elder* who on certain occasions is spoken of as an *overseer*."⁴

¹ Acts xiv. 23.

³ Acts xx. 28.

² Acts viii. 17.

⁴ 1 Tim. v. 1, 17, 19.

In the Church of Christ at this time there can be traced very clearly three perfectly distinct grades comprising the ministry : apostles, presbyters or priests, and deacons ; and in the apostolate alone rested the power of ordination and government. A few years later, however, we find, from evidence obtained from the Pastoral Epistles, that another Order has been created. He is not an apostle, for that order was never renewed, but a superior officer exercising apostolic functions and one raised in position above the *elder*. Such a representative do we find in Timothy placed by S. Paul at Ephesus with authority to speak and act in his jurisdiction of the Church as though he were an apostle himself.¹ He is placed in a position as head of the Church at Ephesus, a position quite distinct from the elders and overseers who were already fulfilling their duties there. He is one of a new set of Apostles—the *Bishop*. And what was done to the Church of Ephesus was done to the Church of Crete, where Titus was placed, whose duty it was to finish the work of S. Paul and to “ *ordain elders in every city.* ”²

Nor was the consecration of such men to the episcopal college confined to the Church of the Uncircumcision or the Gentile Church. A man,

¹ 1 Tim. i. 3, 18 ; ii. 8, 11 ; iv. 6. ² Titus i. 5 ; ii. 15.

James, is placed at Jerusalem to perform similar functions. This man was not an apostle. He was neither James the Great nor James the Less. He was James the Just, commonly known as the "*brother of the Lord*," the one who wrote the Epistle.¹ And from the fact that S. Paul merely mentions these exclusive men in the course of his writings, it may very well be assumed that there were others raised to the same dignity in great cities where the Church of Christ was rapidly adding to her numbers. At any rate, when we enter the second century we find that bishops were to be found *everywhere and in every church*. There is no exception to the rule. It has been said by a justly honoured theologian of the Anglican Church that "*God's providence had ordained that the universal form of government should be the Episcopal form.*"²

And from that time even to our own days, bishops have existed in the Catholic Church of God. Episcopacy was the form of government of the Church, put forth in accordance with the heavenly image, and universally adopted by all Christians through a period of fifteen centuries. A difficulty has been put forward by some people who think that they see in S. Paul's first letter

¹ S. Mark vi. 3.

² Plummer.

to Timothy an inference which proves that Episcopacy was not necessary for ordination. The elders had the power of the "laying on of hands," so it is said. Here is the reference: "*Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery.*"¹ True, but it is surely an axiom of all well-regulated argument that nothing can be proved and certainly no doctrine put forth on the strength of a single passage of Holy Scripture torn away from its context. Another passage referring to the same ordination in S. Paul's second epistle changes the outlook altogether for such people. In these words does he address Timothy: "*Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God which is in thee, by the putting on of my hands.*"²

That the Apostle of the Gentiles associated the elders with him in this ordination is admitted, but it does not follow, nor has it ever been claimed, that the latter could perform this function separately and apart from the bishop. At the ordination of priests in the Anglican Church when the bishop places his hands upon the candidates for priestly gifts, all the presbytery within the sanctuary associate themselves with the

¹ 1 Tim. iv. 14.

² 2 Tim. i. 6.

officiating bishop in the placing of their hands also on the bowed head.

This is the Sacrament of Orders, one which the Church dare not deprive herself of, if she be true to her Divine Lord.

If, as we are told, the great doctrine of Apostolic Succession which springs from this Sacrament is the one insuperable obstacle for bringing about reunion with modern Nonconformity, then it must remain so. The latter left the Church on their own terms, and must return only on the terms of the Church, which have never changed.

But further, in the great desire for reunion, it must ever be remembered that there are millions of Greek and Latin Catholics who are already one with us in the same Lord, the same Faith, the same Baptism—Christians who have the same Ministry. It would be a wonderful thing to bring about reunion in our own country, but even this pales into insignificance when we try to realise what would be the incalculable glory of a world-wide reunion.

Much though we desire to fulfil the will of our Saviour Jesus Christ, we cannot violate His truths, and to renounce our belief in the Historic Episcopate would be to postpone the cause of reunion for ever.

SERMON XII

THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY MATRIMONY

“ Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife, and they shall be one flesh.”

Is Christian marriage inviolable? That is the question which is troubling many earnest minds at this time, for on a correct answer to it depends very largely whether the morals of our countrymen should take a progressive or retrograde move.

Marriage is a condition of life which, in the language of the book Genesis, was instituted by God in the time of man's innocency—at the Creation. He united our first parents in a holy relationship, and inspired Adam to make that utterance which was in very truth a prophetic declaration that “ *a man shall leave his father and his mother and shall cleave unto his wife, and they shall be one flesh.*”¹ Such language is singularly remarkable, for it does more than

¹ Gen. ii. 24.

infer, it definitely asserts, that Holy Matrimony creates a union between a man and a woman closer than the nearest natural or blood relationship ; for it makes the twain *one flesh*. Marriage, therefore, is much more than an ordinary contract between two people, a contract which may be broken at the pleasure of both ; but here is formed a relationship so vital, so intense, that the two become one, their flesh the same.

Further, if it be contended that the union is but an ordinary contract, then at least we must be allowed to enforce that there are *three* parties to the contract—the man, the woman, and God ; and until we are absolutely certain, which we can never hope to be, that He has given His consent to the dissolution of the contract, then the marriage, even from this point of view, must remain inviolable.

That this is the teaching of the Church no one who has read through the Marriage Office can doubt for a moment.

Let me recall one or two of the expressions found therein :

“ Those whom God hath joined together, let no man put asunder.”

The man and the woman both most solemnly declare that they will take each other *“ till death us do part.”*

The officiating priest distinctly asks each in succession whether they will be faithful and adhere to that inviolable contract "*so long as ye both shall live,*" and the answer given in each case is, "*I will.*"

Lastly, in one of the concluding prayers, it is stated that God "*didst teach that it should never be lawful to put asunder those whom God by matrimony hadst made one.*"

If, then, we believe that the Church is the interpreter of God's Will, no other conclusion can possibly be arrived at but that Christian marriage is indissoluble in the sight of God.

Since the year 1857, when the present Divorce Acts came into operation, the State, ignoring the teaching of the Church and what comes to the same thing, the teaching of Christ, has made it possible for two married people to separate and contract second marriages with other partners.

The Church denounces those Acts and prays for their repeal.

Yet, bad enough though all this is, there is a tendency nowadays to still further loosen the marriage bonds.

At the present time adultery must be proved to have taken place before a divorce can be

obtained. There is, moreover, a special court where such cases can alone be tried.

Recently, however, there have been people in authority and a considerable section of the Press advocating an almost unlimited extension to the facilities for breaking asunder God's Will in this greatest of all social problems.

In the interests of the poor (what hypocrisy !) it has been proposed that the County Court judges and stipendiary magistrates should be given the power of granting divorce ; and (what is more horrible still) on grounds which can now only claim "*judicial separation.*"

Amongst these, we may state, are desertion for two years, confirmed drunkenness, a long period of imprisonment, and incompatibility of temper. Such proposals are nothing short of a desire to fall into a condition of life which is condemned even by non-Christian religions at their best, a state of life which would mean the abolition of all family ties and the ruin of the State.

For two people, after the divorce has taken place, to imagine that they can be married again is an absurdity. Certainly the State has no power to break the one flesh. That power, God even does not entertain, otherwise He would be contradicting His own words.

All that the State can possibly hope to do is to legalise sin. It attempts to make the public contract secure, so far as this life is concerned. It cares nothing for God nor His commands, but is intensely jealous of its own. Should a man leave his wife and marry another, it at once seizes him and punishes him for the sin of bigamy, but had the man asked the State previously for his liberty through the Divorce Court, then all would have been well. If it be admitted that any State has the authority so to disregard and crush the Divine Law of Holy Matrimony, then it may proceed to any extreme and condemn the whole Christian code as essentially unworkable.

There are, however, a large number of people who declare that they are not in the least influenced by what the Church says on this subject, inasmuch as her position cannot be sustained by an appeal to Holy Scripture. Let us suppose that this were true. Would a man be justified in attempting to nullify his marriage if it had been contracted in the first instance according to the Church's ritual, and he had solemnly taken the vows which, as we have already seen, are associated with it? Surely not. But we maintain that the teaching of the Church is the teaching of Christ as recorded in the Gospel,

and that to reject the one is to despise the other.

At the outset we are confronted with the statement that even in the days of the Old Testament God's Will was set at naught by no less a person than Moses. Moses suffered "*a Bill of Divorcement.*" And our Blessed Lord states the reason: "*because of the hardness of their hearts.*"¹

The people on coming out of Egypt had become completely demoralised through living so long with the heathen.

Men put away their wives without any apparent reason and without any ceremonial. Moses did all he could to prevent the spreading of such immorality by compelling them for the future to give the woman a writing of divorce-ment.

What was this divorcement? Nowadays we have fallen into the error of thinking that a divorce or a pseudo-loosening of the marriage tie carries with it the power to marry again.

This was not so in the days of Moses.

His Bill was little more than a "*deed of separation,*" and according to the best authorities it was most probably illegal for either of the two

¹ S. Mark. x. 5.

people to contract a second marriage during the lifetime of their late partner.

But whatever was the case in the time of Moses, let us never forget that we are living under a "*better Covenant.*"

Christ came to give us a perfect law, and to proclaim a code of morals which should never be superseded.

He so exalted the Sacrament of Matrimony that He likened it to the *Mystical Union* which exists between Himself and His Church. In speaking of marriage, He republished the original law as it had been given by God at the Creation. "*They are no more twain but one flesh.*" "*What God hath joined together, let no man put asunder.*" And if no man, then no earthly court could presume to such authority.

Continuing, He gives His own decision on this momentous question. "*I say unto you whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery; and whosoever marrieth her which is put away, doth commit adultery.*"¹ "*It has been said, whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement. But I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit*

¹ S. Matt. v. 21, 32.

adultery; and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery."¹ From these passages the world immediately draws the conclusion that our Divine Lord most emphatically states the fact that adultery is a reason for divorce. Unfortunately for these people, He says nothing of the kind. What He does emphasise is the difference between *fornication* and *adultery*. *Fornication is a sufficient reason for divorce, but not adultery.* Why? Fornication is a condition of moral unchastity effected *before* marriage. The man or woman so affected can marry their sinning partners and none other, because of the creation of the one flesh. If they presume to attempt the impossible by passing through the ceremony of marriage with another, no union can be effected, they can never be married. The world may recognise the marriage, as it undoubtedly does in tens of thousands of instances at the present time, but it is not so with God. With Him it is null and void. Amongst the Jews at this time, the sin of fornication was met with instant judgment—the penalty of death.

It can easily be seen why Christ allowed the sin of fornication not to stand in the way of a man contracting another union without com-

¹ S. Matt. v. 31, 32.

mitting adultery. His first union was with an unchaste and therefore pseudo-wife. He had never been married. Thus the fundamental law of God remained inviolate. It cannot be broken. The union of a man with a woman in matrimony brings about the one flesh, only free and capable of union with another partner when death intervenes.

One might think that the inviolability of marriage has received sufficient proof, were it not for the fact that many people nowadays will draw a distinction between what they are pleased to call the "*innocent*" and the "*guilty*" party in the trial for divorce.

Without arguing from the statement of what one learned judge has said, that "in very few cases the so-called innocent party came into court with clean hands," let it be clearly understood that the Church condemns this fictitious marriage of the "*innocent*" party after divorce, just as much as the other.

For just give me your attention one moment to that utterance of our Blessed Lord which I recently quoted. On that occasion He instances the case of a woman who has been unlawfully put away—that is an innocent woman—and He distinctly says that the man who marries her commits sin. But why?

There can only be one reason, and that is that she is still a *wife*, the wife of her husband who has cast her off, and that the separation from that husband has not severed the marriage bond. Obviously then, if the "innocent" party be prohibited from marrying again, much more does the prohibition apply to the "guilty" party.

Even the disciples of our Lord were so struck with the severity of these sayings that they determined to ask Him again privately on this matter.

In reply, He laid down for ever this rule, that nothing in this world can sever the bond of marriage.

Listen : "*Whosoever shall put away his wife and marrieth another, committeth adultery against her ; and if a woman shall put away her husband and be married to another, she committeth adultery.*" ¹

S. Paul is just as emphatic : "*Let not the wife depart from her husband ; but if she depart, let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband.*" ² Again : "*The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth, but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will, only in the Lord.*" ³

¹ S. Mark x. 11, 12. ² I Cor. vii. 10, 11. ³ I Cor. vii. 39.

And still further: "*So then, if while her husband liveth she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress.*"¹

Surely the Church's declaration that Christian marriage is inviolable is only the echo of our Lord's own words.

The Church is the depository of the Sacred Truth of God, and for her to pander to and condone the evil passions of men instead of rebuking them would unquestionably show that she was no longer worthy of that sacred trust.

However plausible may be the stories which plead for divorce, and many of them are very pitiable, let it always be borne in mind that nothing must be said or done that imperils God's eternal laws. In these days of moral and spiritual laxity too little emphasis is laid upon the fact that the more we safeguard and make inviolable the bond of marriage, the stronger and purer will be the condition of society. Unfortunately the majority of men do not ask what the Will of the Lord is at the great crises of their lives, but they adopt what seems the best policy to pursue for the moment.

Questions of expedience are raised to such a position of importance that men would have

¹ Rom. vii. 3.

them override every foundation principle which has been laid down by Christ.

Ought a man to be united for life to a woman who turns out a reprobate, neglects his children, and finally leaves him altogether ?

This is the kind of query which such people imagine can only have one answer. The case undoubtedly is a hard one, but remember the Holy Scriptures do not disallow separation, only re-marriage.

Further, the man recognised, or ought to have recognised, on the day of his wedding that the union might be "*for worse,*" and yet he pledged himself to be faithful to her "*so long as they both should live.*"

What right has he to break his oath, an oath that was made before God ? None whatever. If such a man does ignore the law of the Church on this question and re-marries during his wife's lifetime, let him clearly understand that he has no right to demand any of the privileges of the Church so long as he lives with her ; and though the State may sanction this union, it is nothing less than a condition of legalised adultery before God.

The Marriage question is one which concerns all who profess and call themselves Christian, and the moment is opportune when one and all

should unite to obtain, by every legitimate means, the repeal of those immoral Divorce Acts, which not only defy the law of God, but blight the moral life of the nation.

THE END

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